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## ABSTRACT

This collection contains 13 selected papers presented at the 1992 conference of the International Association of School Librarianship. Titles are as follows: (1) "The Difference of Literature: Writing for the Future of Young Adults" (Aidan Chambers); (2) "Managing School Library Change" (Peggy Heeks); (3) "The Power of Information Literacy: Unity of Education and Resources for the 21st Century" (Ross J. Todd, Liz Lamb, and Celeste McNicholas); (4) "The Concept of the Virtual School Library" (Margaret Butterworth); (5) "Lobbying for Effective Resources Based Learning: An Australian Experience" (Fay Nicholson); (6) "Getting To Know You: Fiction as a Tool To Create a World of Mutual Understanding and Respect" (Gunilla Janlert); (7) "Irish Literature in Austria" (Gerda Faerber); (8) "Books and Media for All South African Children in the 21st Century?" (Sandra Olen); (9) "Opening Shutters and Letting in the Light? Contemporary Irish Writing for Children" (Robert Dunbar); (10) "Postmodernism in Youth Literature: A Road away from the Reader?" (Kari Skjonsberg); (11) "Literature and Literacy: The Real Book Approach to Children Learning To Read" (Beatrice Wortley); (12) "The Role of Children's Books in a Multicultural Society" (Pierre G. F. Overduin); and (13) "The Provision of Public Library Services in the Irish Language" (Criostoir Mag Fhearaigh). Most of the papers include references. (MES)

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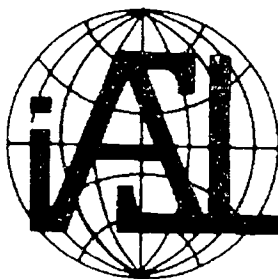
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## 21st Annual Conference

# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANSHIP

## SELECTED PAPERS



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# TOWARDS THE 21ST CENTURY: BOOKS AND MEDIA FOR THE MILLENNIUM

Selected Papers from the 21st Annual Conference  
International Association of School Librarianship

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# The Difference of Literature: Writing for the Future of Young Readers

by  
Aidan Chambers

*Sidney Robbins Lecture 1992 given at the Queen's University, Belfast. During the Twenty-First Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship.*

In the late nineteen sixties, when Sidney Robbins was planning the first of the Exeter conferences in celebration of them, children's books in Britain were in a season of high bloom. Take 1967, a convenient quarter-century date, as a sample. That year these books were published in the UK for the first time:

*Smith* by Leon Garfield, *The Mouse and his Child* by Russell Hoban, *The Piemakers* by Helen Gresswell, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl, *The Dream-Time* by Henry Treece, *Flambards* by K.M. Peyton, *To a Wild Sky* by Ivan Southall, *The Dolphin Crossing* by Jill Paton Walsh, and *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary* by Charles Keeping.

And that's not all. Two others must be added to the list. One of them, *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, had taken five years to cross the Atlantic and only reached here at all because of the determination of an editor, Judy Taylor at the Bodley Head, who refused to be swayed by the general opinion among librarians, teachers, and other publishers who had seen a copy of the American edition, that the wild things would frighten the life out of little children and not sell. Now we recognize it as the work that most clearly demonstrates the poetics of the picturebook as a literary form. With it, the picturebook came of age. The other book, *The Owl Service* by Alan Garner, was very quickly, though not uncontroversially, recognized as a novel that redefined the possibilities in writing of adolescence.

When these two books appeared, I was working part-time as a teacher-librarian in a secondary school for eleven-to-sixteen year olds, and part-time as an author trying to write a novel that took twelve years to finish. Its title was *Dance on My Grave*. I didn't know then that it was the beginning of a six-book sequence. The fourth, *The Toll Bridge*, has just been published. If it takes me as long to write the last two as it has to write the fourth, I'll be

ten years older before I've finished; this century will be over; and we'll be two years into the next millennium. Will my books still be in print then? Will the *Wild Things* and *The Owl Service*? Indeed, will literature in book-print survive for long into the twenty-first century? There are those who say it won't and don't care if it doesn't. There are those who think its days are over already--that it is outmoded and survives only because a group of elitists keep it going. And there are always the millennialists, who thrill themselves with an apocalyptic view of the world and for whom the year two thousand will set off a revolution that will sweep away the book culture of the last thousand years.

Of course, there is bound to be something of a fuss as the century turns. We'll be prone to thoughts of making a fresh start and will want to prune away shards of our old ways that we feel hinder us or are too closely identified with what used to be the baggage we'd rather not carry with us into the new life. By the time I've written the last of the six books by the *Dance* sequence, what will be the state of children's books as a whole? If, that is, there is still anything wholesome left to talk about. What will be the state of the book?

The rest of this lecture will occupy itself with itinerant thoughts on some of those questions. And it will be an episodic narrative because I am a fiction writer and that is the kind of mind I have.

To start with I'd like to say a little more about *Where the Wild Things Are* and *The Owl Service*. If toasting glasses were in our hands, I'd ask you to raise them in celebration of those two eximious works of art. In the days that followed their publication, I gave them to the teenagers I was teaching, each in the same way--I read them aloud. Both had the same effect on my pupils as they'd had on me. I can best describe it as "greedy astonishment." We were astonished by their unfamiliarity, their unexpectedness, by the strength of the emotions and ideas they provoked in us--in other words, by the intensity of the pleasure they gave us. There was more to them than we were used to getting from books of this kind, and we were greedy for more. The ways this greed showed

itself were in an impulse to read the books again at once and a demand for more like them, a demand which of course couldn't be satisfied easily. I remember pupils who never dreamt of spending money on a book going off and buying copies, not just because they couldn't wait for their turn to borrow the school's, but because they wanted copies of their own. (Please note: We're talking hardback books at hardback prices, not mass-market paperbacks at ice-cream prices.) Only a little while before, some of these same pupils had told me there were no fiction books in the library they wanted to read.

On me the experience had two particular effects. It taught me that the dogma spewed upon us nowadays by such disinterested philosophers as Mr. Rupert Murdoch, that people know what they want and should be given it, is one of the fashionable half-truths of the late twentieth century. The half that is true is that people often do know what they want, but only if they already know about it. If something doesn't exist, or if we don't know that it is there because we aren't shown it or given access to it, how can we know we want it? It is the work of artists to bring into being that which doesn't exist yet, and it is the work of teachers and librarians to show children what there is and give them access to it. In particular, it is their work to introduce to them that which is least familiar.

One of the lessons I have learned as a result of my twentieth-century life is to be wary of anyone who talks about "the people" and to distrust completely anyone who claims to be acting for "the people." "The people" do not exist any more than "the child" beloved of writers on education exists. What does exist are people, individuals living together in various and multifarious relationships, among whom are some living in a state we call childhood, a condition of human life that is far from singular, is not at all the stable, quantifiable, and describable entity some of us think it is.

The second thing the *Wild Things* and *The Owl Service* taught me was that frequently underestimate ourselves (as writers, as educators) and, even more, the young people for whom we are responsible. We are all capable of far more than those who want to manipulate us tell us we are. Those pupils I mentioned showed me they could far exceed anything they were though capable of doing because a great piece of writing engaged their minds and emotions and enabled them to extend their reach. *The Owl Service*, especially, did the same

for me as a writer. It revealed to me possibilities I hadn't thought were graspable within the confines (And I thought of them as confines then; I don't now.) of fiction for teenagers. It was an experience that taught me, as Margaret Meek puts it, *How Texts Teach What Readers Learn*.

When I look back at my own history, I realize that it is the people who have encouraged me, enabled me to reach beyond what I thought I could grasp that I honour, remember with gratitude and affection, and still live in me: my parents, some teachers, my wife, a few friends. Many others were met and still live for me in their writing. These are the people whose company I keep and who I would not live without. I'll hazard a guess it is the same for you.

If literature for children is to continue through the next millennium, it will depend on writers who make a difference and on adults who make that difference available to children. Talk of the millennium and the company I keep reminds me of the great modernist Italian author, Italo Calvino. His book *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* is the great novel about reading. He was to give the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1985 but died on the eve of his departure for the USA. He had written five of the six lectures. His wife records that he spent nine months working on them obsessively. He called them *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. It seems appropriate that the death of this exemplary modern author left his readers the job of thinking out the ending for ourselves, an indeterminacy Calvino would have relished. Perhaps he was so obsessive about them because he sensed he was dying; certainly his signing of "the values, qualities or peculiarities of literature" he wanted, as he put it, "to situate within the perspective of the new millennium" make a wonderful last testament. I expect you remember how at the beginning, he writes, "My confidence in the future of literature consists in the knowledge that there are things that only literature can give us, by means specific to it." I note he doesn't speak of confidence based on belief, but of confidence based on **knowledge**. What is it we can **know** about the specialty of literature. If each of us were to write down in the next half hour a list of "those things that only literature can give us," I wonder what we'd find at the end. I've been playing that game myself lately and have to say I've found it much harder than I expected. A few of my answers are here. But

now I want to make a digression, the point of which will, I hope, become clear very soon.

As a teenager during the nineteen fifties, I was devoted to the theatre. Around 1953 television swept across the land, and in its wake theatres closed everywhere. Old established repertory companies were disbanded; historic theatres were pulled down. People were saying that the theatre was dead, a demise begun by cinema and radio and finished by television. I remember sixth form debates on such motions as "The Theatre is Dead, Long Live the Theatre." And it's true, the majority of plays at that time were tired, bland, empty-headed affairs. The producers with power were a few monopolistic moguls who disliked anything that smacked of intellectual, emotional, or technical challenge. There were many who said the theatre was so bad, so clapped out, so out of date that it deserved to die.

But what happened? Some writers, a few independent producers and directors, younger actors, designers, one or two critics, an academic or two asked whether the death of the theatre was inevitable. They loved it, believed it possessed unique qualities that were essential to human life. They set about analyzing what was special to theatre; what it could do that cinema and radio and television couldn't do at all, or couldn't do as well. And they based their work on that understanding. The result was that for the past thirty years in Britain we've had the most flourishing theatre we've known since Shakespeare's day. There are signs of a falling-off again, but that's another matter.

Some of the leaders among them are now established figures: Peter Brook, Peter Hall, Joan Littlewood, the late George Devine and his English Stage Company, Samuel Beckett, and Harold Pinter. What they identified was that theatre is primarily about the dynamic physical presence of the human body interpreting a text orchestrated by the sense-making music of the human voice--words in speech embodied in flesh and blood right there in the room with you. So they argued for small theatres in which everybody in the audience is close to the actors; they attended carefully to the subtlety and density of the text and how it is spoken; they got rid of cluttered fake scenery and other fripperies and emphasized instead the use of light and colour and the arrangement of shape in the temenos of that ancient circle Peter Brook called "the empty

space" and we call the stage; and so they created an emotionally and intellectually powerful, tactile theatre. It is a history now well known. I sat in the beautiful little Swan Theatre at Stratford on Avon the other night marvelling at an exquisitely measured, precisely articulated production by Peter Hall of *All's Well That Ends Well* and thinking that there at arm's length from me was the maturely sophisticated expression of the analysis Hall had begun for himself thirty-seven years ago in his famous production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the play that to my mind is the ionic text for all this; and as I watched I knew, knew in my guts as well as in my mind, that here was something of a nature and value I could possess and make my own no other way.

My contention is that, as we move into the next millennium and what some call "the post-industrial era of technology," we book-loving people will have to perform the same act of rediscovery for literature-in-print as those people did for theatre. And the best way this will be done is not so much by studying the question in theory as by thoughtful practice--by writers and readers working it out together through their experience of writing and reading books that exploit the difference of literature, just as theatre people worked it out in the productions of texts. The more I try to perform that act myself, the more sure I become that the results could be the same for book-literature as it was in theatre--a great new flourishing just at the time when it looks as if the form is dying.

In *Six Memos*, Calvino explores some of his own practically worked-out understandings, and sums it up this way.

In an age when other fantastically speedy, widespread media are triumphing, and running the risk of flattening all communication into a single, homogeneous surface, the function of literature is communication between things that are different, not blunting but even sharpening the differences between them, following the true bent of written language. [p. 45]

If your own experience of exploring what those differences are is similar to my own, you'll have discovered that we have to investigate some deep-rooted assumptions. As, for example, our assumption about what a book is.

A couple of years ago I was teaching the opening session of a one-year course in children's literature with a group of first-year undergraduates. Our subject that afternoon

was the picturebook. We'd spent half an hour browsing round a collection of about a hundred titles. I wanted the students to think about the poetics of the picturebook. So to start the seminar off I wrote on the board these words:

Picture book  
Picture-book  
Picturebook

and asked if these different combinations mattered. The students looked at me warily, being well versed in teacherly traps, and finally muttered that yes, it probably did matter. But they couldn't tell why. I then made a move I had not planned. I suggested that as the picturebook, whatever difference the spelling made, was above all a book, we might as well begin there. "Define a book for me," I said, expecting an instant answer. Nothing.

Does this surprise you, as it did me, or do you already know what we found out from each other? In all of their schooling and my own, no one had ever either defined a book for us or asked us to define it. In their case 15 years of formal education, in mine 52, in which the primary mode of communication after speech was book-print, and yet no one had thought it necessary that we should think about the form itself. Not surprising, in fact. While a form of communication is dominant we tend to take it for granted, or assume that we know all about it. Only when it is under threat or been overtaken in predominance by another form, do we begin to wonder whether we need it at all and why. The book, and especially the literary book, is in exactly that position nowadays.

Well, we set about trying to define the word **book** and had a difficult time. The dictionary was a help but seemed to miss some essentials. Here's what we finally arrived at as the basic minimum:

A book is a sequence of pages on which appear meaning-communicating marks, all of which are bound together in an authorized order.

Of course, we'll need subdivisions which deal with modifiers: picture book, note book, sketch book, account book. But for anything to count as a book it will have to conform to the primary sense. A book is always a sequence of pages which are bound together, and the pages are always in an authorized order. The key word here is **authorized**. The authority of the

book. The authority of the book is that it is authored.

Whatever we have learned about the reader being in charge, about the reader being able to do whatever he wants with a book, it is also true that a book is created by a writer arranging marks on pages in a sequence that she wanted the reader to acknowledge and attend to. Wayne Booth has reminded us that both authors and readers have particular responsibilities to texts. To both of them, the central matter is, or should be, the written text. That is what books are for and that is why authors write them and readers read them. In no activity more than in reading a book is responsibility left so completely in the hands of the individual person without imposition or policing by institutional authority, and nowhere is the ideal of responsibility made more practical and graphic--it has after all to do with the graphemic itself--than during the reading of a book. It is essential to the nature of a book. It is one of the reasons why totalitarians of every stripe--political, religious, educational, bureaucratic--are so much bothered by books that they try to ban or even burn them.

Not that we should give uncritical allegiance to any individual book's authority. We learn to discriminate; we pick and choose, giving our attention to those which persuade us by their authenticity. We often talk with children about a book's subject matter, or the characters in a story, perhaps too little about the language itself. But something we talk about hardly at all is that, as W. H. Auden put it, "The underlying reason for writing is to bridge the gulf between one person and another," or as Harold Brodkey expressed it, "Reading is an intimate act, perhaps more intimate than any other human act. I say that because of the prolonged (or intense) exposure of one mind to another." What gives us the deepest, continuing pleasure is the company we keep with the mind, the personality, the being we call the author.

John Berger, another author whose company I like to keep, explains what makes for authenticity in an essay on the credibility of words in his book *Keeping a Rendezvous*:

Authenticity in literature does not come from the writer's personal honesty. There have been great writers who were mythomaniacs. Writers in general break their word at least as often as most other sedentary people. Moreover, many writers--not all--are excessively egocentric, blind to

everything that turns its back on them. The disappointment of readers on meeting an admired writer probably begins with this confusion about the source of authenticity. It has little to do with either honesty or wisdom; still less with a devotion to beauty or aesthetics... Authenticity comes from a single faithfulness: that to the ambiguity of experience. Its energy is to be found in how one event leads to another. Its mystery is not in the words but on the page. [p. 216]

"Its mystery is not in the words but on the page." Berger is leading us to the heart of the matter. In no other form of verbal communication, in no other art than the art we call literature is the communicator as much in command of the medium as when composing a book; in no other is the recipient as much in control of the medium as a reader is when reading a book; in no other is the mind of the recipient in such direct touch with the mind of the communicator; in no other is there as much left for the recipient to do in the making of the experience as there is for the reader; in no other is it possible to achieve such density, such subtlety, such inexhaustible ambiguity, such multiplicity of meanings as it is in a book. And the mystery of this, Berger says, is not in the words--a book-load of print-like words can be beamed at you from the screen of a word processor--the mystery is not in the words *but on the page*.

What is the mystery of the page? Young children, when they are learning to read, demonstrate one aspect of it that literary adults often forget. They chew books and hug them and paw at the pages. One of the reasons the page is so important is that it is tactile. The book, an object made of pages, is designed for holding in the hand; the binding is designed so that the pages can be turned. The physicality of book-reading, its appeal to our fingers, is hardly at all attended to by researchers into reading. In earlier times when the book was dominant this didn't matter. Now that there is a variety of electronic print that do not involve pages, the book's touchability does matter, makes it special, different, and needs to be thought about. Not just because it affects the reader but because it affects the writer. Writing for a page is different from writing for electronic display. The boundaries are different; the grouping and bordering of lines of words are different. The way the turnover of the page can be used is obliterated by electronic display. And, as we'll remind ourselves in a moment, the

stable nature of the page is lost in electronic display.

The experience of reading a story or poem on book pages is also noticeably different from reading it on an electronic screen. For me, electronic print not only reduces my pleasure considerably but also diminishes the quality of my attention: I am less patient with it, take less in, am less aware of the play for meaning.

Why? Perhaps because there is a considerable visceral, emotional, and intellectual link in human activity between the hand and the eye. After the Iron Man in Ted Hughes' famous story has fallen from the top of the cliff and smashed himself to bits, it is only when the hand finds the eye and then the eye directs the hand that the Iron Man can rebuild himself. The ways in which hand and eye work together, what each does, determines the nature of the experience, the pleasure we enjoy, and, where reading is concerned, not just the meaning we make of the words but the meaning we make of the whole event of selecting what to read, of visiting the words through the medium of the book or an electron machine, of considering what we've read and revisiting the words in order to reconsider them.

The book possesses other qualities that make it profoundly different from every other medium. These have been rehearsed fairly often and don't need more than listing here: the user-friendliness of the book and of book-print; the way pages of book-print--their size and shape, the design of typography, the length of lines, the use of spacing, the texture and even colour of paper--have been refined over two thousand years to a format and appearance that exactly fits the human hand, so that the object is a pleasure to hold, and suits the human eye and what it can easily take in as it moves over the print.

Anyone who has spent any length of time working on a word processor while also using books, as I am doing right this minute, will know how different it is looking at the words on a screen and looking at words on a book-page. The book exists only for print and for reading; that is its purpose in life. Every form of electronic print is simply part of something else, a machine that has other uses, and is primarily designed, not for reading or writing words, but for manipulating electronic pulses. If it is reading written language that matters to us then what we want is the book, because the book is the home where written

language lives and where readers live with written language.

But we aren't finished yet. Another essential quality of book literature, another aspect of its being, is length. Though a book can contain many smaller units, like a collection of poems or short stories, or anecdotes, or even one-line jokes, it implies by bringing them together, relatedness--a reason for those units being gathered in one volume--and therefore suggests they should be attended to as a whole. In other words, book print is the site of coherent, concentrated attention.

I was talking about this recently with my friend Alan Tucker, a bookseller and poet. In a letter afterwards, he wrote:

What people (children) read for is the literature, the words. When the text is secondary to the illustrator it is already appealing to the senses more than the mind. There is no shortage of nice things for the senses in children's (or adult) lives here now.

**Only** the book can discuss the million critical issues of our society (a world society). The press is: 1) too ephemeral, short term; 2) too frightened of being boring; 3) too brief, aiming always at spurious simplification. The same is true of other media. Only books are long and detailed, **and uninterrupted** enough to grapple with anything serious.

And they can only do this, and civilization survive as culture rather than a fun fair or theme park, if people are physically capable of concentrating their minds. As ever, most things come naturally to children. The one great asset schools can give children is **intellectual stamina**, stick-at-it-ness. Which comes from reading literature, by the process we all agree--pleasure in reading.

Because these words are being read aloud to you, you can't see those to which Alan give typographic emphasis, so I'll repeat them. "**Only** the book can discuss the million critical issues of our society," "only books are **uninterrupted** enough to grapple with anything serious," and "the greatest asset schools can give children is **intellectual stamina**, which comes from reading literature with pleasure." Hear, hear, I say to that.

There are two points I want to pick up from Alan. The first has to do with detailed length.

In pre-electronic times, sustained length was considered a virtue. Think of Samuel Pepys, for example, complaining in his diary if the Sunday sermon lasted less than three hours. Think of the long periodic sentence so

brilliantly composed by writers like Dr. Johnson, George Eliot, and Dickens. Think of the three-decker novel. Since the arrival and development of electronic media, brevity has increasingly been counted a virtue and sustained length is disliked. So much so that now politicians are trained to speak in ten-second sound bites; the average length of a shot in an advertisement on television is less than two seconds; and anyone in an interview who speaks for more than a minute is interrupted or cut off. By that standard this lecture is already long past endurance; even as I write it, I do not expect the majority of you in the audience to be listening. That is why, in many institutions of tertiary education, where sustained concentration would, you might suppose, be part of learning, the formal lecture is now on the decline. I don't necessarily regret this but merely point it out as a fact of contemporary life.

However, because this is so, it does not follow that sustained attention--intellectual stamina--is no longer a good thing or is unnecessary. On the contrary. Because so many aspects of contemporary life work against it, it has become all the more important that we acquire it. This doesn't mean, though, that we must read three-decker novels written in long periodic sentences as the equivalent of a mental work-out. There are ways of writing literature which mesh with contemporary rhythms of thought and yet still exploit length. Calvino, who himself brilliantly explored some of these narrative forms, puts it this way in *Six Memos*:

In the even more congested times that await us, literature must aim at the maximum concentration of poetry and thought. [p. 51]...But I would say that today the rule of "Keep it Short" is confirmed by long novels, the structure of which is accumulative, modular, and combinatory. [p. 120]

The irony is that the more concentrated the meanings we pack into what we write, and the more modular and combinatory we make the structure, the more we need to read it in book-form because of the greater need there is to reread it, and to move back and forth and pick and choose and mix and match in the way a book makes easy. We need what the book encourages--time to dwell on the page, and the most efficient control of the writing within the authorized sequence. If that's true, then the book is far from finished but is entering an era when it is as necessary as it ever was.

The other point I wanted to pick up from Alan Tucker has to do with literature being fun. This is one of those issues about which you must be careful what you say or you'll be branded a kill-joy moral-didacticist, a promoter of boring lesson-teaching solemnity, but I'll risk it. As long ago as 1978 Penelope Lively wrote in the *Horn Book* that, "We do actually believe now that children's books need to be fun and nothing else." This is now a fashionable opinion. I have difficulty understanding the sense of it. Surely, fun is not a thing in itself, something that can be delivered to you like a bag of candy, but is the name we give to the feeling when engaged in an activity that gives us amusement and pleasure. We can get fun from thinking hard as much as from lying in the sun and, as we put it, "doing nothing." People who, like me, are lucky enough to be doing what we want to do get fun out of their work. Fun is not an absolute determined by only certain kinds of behavior.

Besides, linguists, researchers in ideology, feminist and literary critics have all shown us how it is impossible for a story to be "fun and nothing else." Every story, every poem, every piece of literary writing carries a message, even if the writer doesn't know it's there. All works of literature are moral systems; they all, without exception and however slight, deal in the stuff of life and the nature of being.

Brough Girling, one of our most vocal publicists and promoters of children's books, has taken the appeal to "fun and nothing else" a step further. He tells us that children's books are toys and should be sold as such. Just as I have trouble identifying what can be fun and nothing else in a book, so I have trouble with the concept of a book as a toy--which I take to mean, as *Collins English Dictionary* puts it, "an object designed to be played with and which is a nonfunctioning replica of something else, especially a miniature one." If that is what a toy is, then a book is something different. It is an object designed to contain meaning--communicating marks arranged in an authorized order as a means of enabling the reading of written language. We may find it fun to read a book, but it is not there for "fun and nothing else," nor is it a replica of something else. There is a good deal of play involved in reading but books are not intended as playthings in the usually accepted sense of that word--that is, as objects you invest with imaginary functions, as for instance turning sitting room chairs into a space ship that you

imagine transporting you to another planet till tea time.

I'm making heavy weather of this point because it seems to me that we are doing books and children as readers a disservice just now in our anxiety to sell more books and promote reading by trying to transfer onto books the easy popularity of a different kind of object--toys as pastime entertainment. The danger is that it doesn't actually work. Books don't provide the kind of fun that toys do, and to suggest to children that they do will lead to disappointment because it raises the wrong expectations. Just as bad, it encourages a tendency to select as most worthy of attention--for publishers' promotions, reviewing, television exposure, and so on--those books which most nearly are like toys, which, where books are concerned, inevitably means the banal, the gimmicky, the most toy-like (think of the vogue of pop-ups a few years ago, and the increasing production of books that are only an adjunct to other more toyish stuff: games, videos, and what are called, always at the implied expense of books, "activity" packages, as if reading were not itself an activity).

Children's books as toys for fun is tangled with another misunderstanding about books--that they are part of the entertainment industry, like TV and cinema and pop music where success is judged by size of audience. In book publishing this is expressed in quantity of sales and the accountancy notion of the best seller list. During the last few years the decision-making power in many publishing houses has moved out of the hands of editors and into the hands of the sales department. Now books are referred to as units, are often remaindered within months of publication if they don't quickly reach profitable sales figures, and the maintenance of a backlist is secondary to volume of unit sales.

Let's unpick the confusions that have led to this destructive state of affairs. First, books do not belong to the entertainment industry. Some books, it is true, are intended as pastime amusements, but not the majority. Most books are intended to store and communicate information--everything from a child's first dictionary to the records of legal case histories, from school text books to Mandelbrot's *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*. It may be fun to read them if we are interested in their subject matter, but to provide "fun and nothing else" could hardly be described as their purpose. And the observable fact is that when the vast

majority of people want to be, as we say, simply entertained, they actually look to other forms of amusement than books, nowadays usually TV or a video. (Why? Because, by comparison, reading is always hard work.)

Secondly, the confusion about books as units of commerce, the success of which is determined by volume of sales. By this standard Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, Barbara Cartland, and Jeffrey Archer are judged more successful than Jan Mark, Alan Garner, Brigid Brophy, and William Trevor. But this is a misjudgment about what books are for. When we use the word *book*, we can think of it in two ways--as a singular work, the novel we call *The Owl Service*, or as an object reproduced many many times--the thousands of copies in various formats since 1967: hardback, cheap paperback, large-print, Braille, and school editions, other-language translations, and so on; all called *The Owl Service*. To judge success by large-quantity sales is to confuse the book's easy reproducibility for its main purpose and to encourage the belief that those that sell a great many copies are better than those that sell only a few.

But of course mass production is not the main purpose of a book. Rather, it is intended as a means of printing messages in a stable and unchangeable physical form; that is, to preserve an authorized communication, and to present the text in an object that can be conveniently read, and be easily transported across long distances and across time. The audience for a book is one. But so perfect is the design for its purpose, that the singular book can easily be reproduced as many times as necessary. Whether or not vast numbers of people want to own copies has nothing to do with its reason for being, but only to do with the desire of some people to make money. For them, it doesn't actually matter whether they are selling books or sweets or secondhand cars. As Alan Sugar, founder of Amstrad [computer] Corporation, so famously put it in one of the pithiest statements of the 1980s postmodern amorality, "If there was a market in mass-produced portable nuclear weapons then we'd market them."

Of course, there are others who claim they want to sell large numbers of books because they are interested in people, especially children, being readers, and I don't doubt their honesty. But we will only succeed in that aim if we concentrate on what makes books different from other saleable objects, and not talk them

up as being something they aren't. Far from being toys made for nothing but fun, the success of which can be judged by sales, books make available a vast variety--hundreds of thousands--of individual, singular texts, each of which supplies a particular need (dictionaries, reference books, text books) or offers a particular, companionship (poetry, stories, novels, biography, essays) to a particular reader at a particular time.

Which means that knowing how to select the ones we want is part of what it is to be a reader. And because there are so many to select from, this in turn means that those who help us are potentially important to our well-being. Where children are concerned, therefore, the adults who are charged with the greater part of the responsibility of enabling children to become readers need to be clear about what they are doing and why. The responsible enablers are teachers and librarians. They can't afford to be confused or ignorant. Every child has only one chance, one chance to be three or four, or nine or ten, or fourteen or fifteen. If enabling adults get it wrong, a school leaver can't say, "You didn't do too well at helping me. Why don't I go back to being three and start again, and you can have another try." Of course there are all sorts of impediments that get in the way over which teachers and librarians have no control. And I've written a good deal about the best that teachers can do. I won't repeat it here. But I do want to make a point about how we enable the enablers.

Children's and youth librarians first. Their great asset has traditionally been a detailed knowledge of the books and their skill at working informally with children and parents. You'll recall that in *Young Fluent Readers*, her seminal study of children who come to school already able to read, Margaret M. Clark wrote that the place of the children's librarian in the reading lives of those children and their families could not be over estimated. Since she wrote those words in the early 1970s a change has been enforced that puts at risk the skills that made children's librarians so valuable. It is the change from training specialist children's librarians to training all librarians as generalists, with, at best, a short optional course for anyone who is interested in work with young readers. What being a generalist means is that you are mainly a systems processor rather than someone with an intimate knowledge of books.

Whatever the reasons for that change, one result is certain. In Britain now young librarians leave their training institutions with little if any knowledge or understanding of the history of literature for the young, with an inadequate knowledge of even the contemporary books, with no preparation in dealing with children or how to mediate books to them. They have to learn on the job. Learning on the job means learning at children's expense. A child who needs help needs it now. She can't wait while you mug up what you should know.

It is time to campaign for specialist training again.

For teachers things are a little better than they were. There is much more widespread recognition now than there was in the early 1970s that teachers need courses in literature for children during their pre-service training. From doing nothing at all, as was the case in my days as a student in the 1950s, many institutions, perhaps most, now try to do something. Not enough, of course, and things have got harder since the British government began its demoralizing attacks on the teaching profession and gave legal and economic force to its retrograde policies. We're all having to work desperately hard just to hold on to the achievements of the last forty years. The experience of my own part in those achievements in this: At the heart of all improvements in a teacher's skill as an enabler of young readers is knowledge of the books.

Let me give you an example. Recently I was looking round the book shop in one of our major teacher-training institutions. There was a modest range of books for children on sale. Standing in front of the shelf of poetry books were a couple of young women who were discussing whether a picturebook they were examining would be suitable for their purpose. I asked them what they wanted. They said they needed good strong verses that five and six year olds would like. It turned out that they were just finishing their college course, would be taking up their first jobs in September, and meanwhile were going to help out in an infant school. As we talked it became clear that they had been persuaded of the importance of reading aloud, taught the place of poetry in children's lives, given some preparation in classroom management, and had learned something of the growth and development of children in the early years of schooling. They'd been into the school where they were to help out, had talked to the teacher, had sorted out

together what it was they wanted to do. Now they needed the primary tools; they needed the books. They'd never hear of the Raymond Briggs' *Mother Goose Treasury*, or *The Young Puffin Book of Verse*, Jill Bennett's *Roger Was a Razor Fish*, three old standards that would have got them going. Neither did they know of any aids like dare I say it, the Thimble Press Signal Bookguide, *Poetry Books for Children* that would have given them plenty of help. They had no reference points that would help them make a selection from the small stock in the book shop. What they had not been given was knowledge of the books. Without that they were stuck.

Since 1982 I've been a visiting lecturer at Westminster College, a pre-service institution at Oxford. One of the things we've been trying to do is discover the optimum number of books that a primary school teacher needs to know if she is to function satisfactorily from day one of her first job. It looks like the answer hovers around the five hundred mark. And it also looks as if it takes most students two or three years to make that basic library their own if they are to do so by reading it with pleasure and with time to absorb it and think about it, and trying out in supervised practice, how best to put their knowledge to work, enabling children as literary readers.

I don't claim that the Westminster courses are all they should be, and I might add that they did not come about by imposition from above but because of pressure from students. We began by offering an optional course. Students who didn't take it began to demand it for themselves; many who had taken it demanded more. This happened for a number of reasons. Because they enjoyed it, of course, but more importantly because they found what they learned was immediately useful in their work with children, and because the professional advantage that those who had taken the course had over those who hadn't was evident.

I had guessed this would be so before we began; it was part of my own experience. One reason I hadn't guessed, however, was, to me at any rate, as valuable as any of the others. It was the effect on the students as readers for themselves. Time and again when they were assessing the course at the end, students would report what had happened to some in phrases such as these:

Through reading children's books, I've discovered myself as a reader

For the first time since I was in primary school I've been reading again with pleasure just for myself.

Because of the children's books I've read now as an adult (well, nearly as an adult), I find they have changed the way I read adult books like the Victorian novels I have to study for the rest of my courses, and it is a change for the better.

I've realized that children's books are not just for children, they are for me too.

When children watch film or the television or go to the theatre, they are engaged in a view of life interpreted by people who come between the writer and the audience. They see what they see at the pace the performers want to give it. They are not usually meant or allowed to stop and go back, or interrupt, or skip a part, or take a break when they feel like it. They are shown the world; they don't make their own version of it; And what they are engaged in is a visual representative of life.

When children read a book they have own hands a vision composed (in English) of twenty-six abstract signs ordered into horizontal lines where they are grouped and spaced and separated by other kinds of abstract marks that indicate how to orchestrate the pages in the theatre of their own heads, where they interpret the vision for themselves, taking it at the pace they want to, and flicking back and forth and skipping and stopping and starting when they feel like it. It is theirs in a way nothing else can be. No one comes between the mind that composed the vision and their own. It is communicated by abstract signs that the reader turns into a reality of her own. "When we read a story," Berger says, "we inhabit it. The covers of a book are like a roof and four walls. What is to happen next is possible because the story's voice makes everything its own."

Literature is about written language; that's what makes it different from everything else. And written language in book form is about sustained, passionate contemplation. As we read we feel strongly, are affected by the vision we inhabit and which inhabits us. Yet, mysteriously, at the same time we can also stand back and consider what it is that is happening to us. We take part in the event--indeed, we *are* the event, it can take place nowhere else but in us; but we are outside it as well, looking on.

"My language is the sum total of myself," Charles S. Pierce wrote. "[People] become what they contemplate," Austin Warren says. Literature is made of language meant for reader-controlled contemplation. That is the essence of the thing, the difference of literature from all else.

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# Managing School Library Change

by

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Questions about time and place are bound to arise in the mind of all of us participating in a conference entitled "Towards the Millennium" and with an international remit. You will guess that they have been occupying me particularly. How can we project ourselves forward in time and also try to take a world perspective?

Faced with the difficulty of these twin tasks, I have found reassurance from two different directions. First, the very point of in international conference is to share information and ideas from our own countries. We all have a role to play in making this conference a point of learning and growth. Secondly, I have been helped by Jane Austen. In June, when I was beginning to assemble thoughts for this session, I went to see a play composed from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Here was a story written in 1814, the time of the Napoleonic Wars, revised in 1815, the year of the Battle of Waterloo. It was a time of great social change, as the habits and customs of the eighteenth century gave way to those of the nineteenth. Did Jane Austen address those matters? No, she chose her immediate environment, and the things she knew well. In her own words, "3 or 4 families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on." That visit to the theatre, that renewal of acquaintance with an author still relevant today, suggested the focus for today's session. That focus is the United Kingdom and the present, and, as Jane Austen, I have drawn on my own experience, which includes both practice and research. Where I depart from Jane Austen is in my attitude toward the future. *Mansfield Park* shows traditional values and quiet ways upheld against the new commercial spirit exemplified by Henry and Mary Crawford. I think, rather, that we must be positive about the future. One of my theses, indeed, will be that we are not sufficiently forward-looking. We need to give time to

envision the future, for it will be shaped by our present actions.

The title that I have chosen unites us across time and space, for change is now a major factor in our work. Nine years ago this was perceived in *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*.<sup>1</sup>

Change, rapid and pervasive, may be the single most important characteristic of the twentieth century.

The truth of that statement has been reinforced in the years since, which have witnessed amazing events on a world scale, such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the war with Iraq. They are years in which we have seen on the one hand the unification of Germany, and on the other the breaking up of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Looking more locally, in the United Kingdom nationalized industries are being privatized, structures of local government are under scrutiny, and there has been educational legislation on an unprecedented scale. Already, in the past decade, we have learnt much about the nature of change, and we are beginning to see ways of handling it.

## The nature of change

One of the writers who has helped me particularly, in thinking about change, is Michael Fullan. *The Meaning of Educational Change*<sup>2</sup> has proved a formative book, which has helped us understand that change is a process, not an event. It is a process with three stages, initiation, implementation and integration, and perhaps we can spend a little time considering these.

*Initiation* is perhaps the easiest stage. It starts with a perception that things could be better, dissatisfaction with the present, an ideas for improvement. The likely success of a the change depends very much on the way in which it is initiated. Looking at school library developments in the United Kingdom over the past six or seven years, one can see change coming from many different directions. A major influence for change was the report *School*

*Libraries: The Foundations of the Curriculum*<sup>3</sup> which emanated from a government department, the Office of Arts and Libraries. Other initiatives of central government which affected, and continue to affect, school libraries were the new General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), taken at age sixteen, and the Technical and Vocational Educational initiative directed especially to the 16-19 age group. Both required a wider range of learning resources and of information-handling skills, and so had a clear potential impact on school libraries. More recently, England and Wales have been affected by legislation, the 1988 Education Reform Act<sup>4</sup>, and Northern Ireland by a similar legal instrument. Among the provisions were the introduction of a national curriculum and a system of financial delegation to schools, a scheme known as Local Management of Schools (LMS). A national curriculum is likely to bring greater uniformity to school stocks, while LMS offers schools much more flexibility in the allocation of their budgets. The Act may be seen as both opportunity and threat to school libraries, and practitioners, researchers, and specialist groups are watching the situation carefully.

The examples I have given are of change coming from outside, in some cases imposed by legislation which leaves little room for individual response.

Other changes have come through outside catalysts. My own *School Libraries on the Move*<sup>5</sup> charts the changes initiated by the School Library Services provided by most Local Education Authorities--the services better known to some as "district level media programs." Sometimes the outside stimulus comes from a conference. A school librarian said to me the day, "The real fulcrum for library change here was a national course I attended. That gave me the confidence that my ideas were right."

Change that is initiated within the school has probably the best chance of succeeding, but a lot depends on the level at which it is initiated and the enthusiasm generated throughout the hierarchy. I remember researching community information systems in the States some years ago, and being told over and again, "Oh, that program folded." Sometimes it had started with the director of libraries, but was never taken up by the front-line staff; at others, the leader was someone of middle management level, who was not fully supported by the senior management

team. The message to take away is that change thrives with multiple promoters.

**Implementation** is the most difficult of the three phases of change, for it is here that rhetoric meets reality. One discovers the unexpected snags, the unforeseen resistance. To progress through this stage, we have to take into account what Fullan calls "the subjective realities" of other players. How does the change fit into their list of priorities? Unless we take into account the perspectives of other members of the school community--students, senior management team, subject teachers--we are likely to fail. And as others become involved, we have to expect that the original idea or plan will get amended, as people adapt it to meet their own agendas. Lincoln's account of trying to introduce a whole-school information skills program illustrates the point. In *The Learning School*<sup>6</sup>, Lincoln tells how the initiative moved forward only when the narrow focus on study skills was abandoned, and teachers began, instead, to reflect on ways in which they could improve students' learning.

Lincoln's report shows us that we should not only allow for amendments to a change initiative; we should welcome them and make space for them. It also reminds us that most change involves an element of risk, insecurity, and fear. That implies the need for strong support--say, from senior staff or governors--for staff trying to implement change. You will remember the parable of the sower of the seed.

A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock, and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundred-fold.<sup>7</sup>

That parable repays study today by anyone engaged in change implementation.

**Integration** is the final phase, when change is assimilated into usual working practices. The whole process is bound to take time, and several experts suggest that we should be thinking in terms of a time-scale of two to three years, depending on the nature of the project.

The past few years have highlighted the need to understand the process of change. They

have also helped us to identify the factors making for success. Whether we look to the field of education, or more widely, we find attitude to change an important indicator. So, we can find Roger Mercer in *Striving for Effective Change in Education Service*<sup>8</sup> concluding:

The organization which is best able to survive and flourish is one where members have the capacity for self renewal or development, and where there is a constant sensing of ways in which things can be improved and future needs can be identified and met.

It is a view expressed even more strongly by Tome Peters:

Today, loving change...is a prerequisite for survival, let alone success.

### The situation of school libraries

Having spent some time on the nature of change, perhaps we can turn now to look at the situation of school libraries. Much of the concern in the United Kingdom over the past decade has centered on secondary school libraries and so most of the evidence I can give is from the secondary phase, but please do not think I under-rate the great contribution made by primary school libraries and librarians.

It was a modest 1981 report from the Department of Education and Science, *Secondary School Library Survey*<sup>9</sup> which first showed us the situation in English schools and confirmed many people's fears. In 37% of schools the library was open and staffed by an adult for fewer than 11 hours a week. Most libraries were staffed by teacher-librarians with no library qualifications: on average they were allocated only 4.5 hours a week for library work. An Office of Arts and Libraries report of 1984, not surprisingly, concluded that improvements were urgently needed, and put forward three theses.

Firstly, that school libraries and school library services have a vital part to play in educating children to be able to make use of information in formal education and throughout life. Secondly, that school libraries are underused, and thirdly, that they are underfunded.<sup>10</sup>

I suspect that, that summary might well apply in countries other than England. What one can see is a cycle of deprivation--inadequate staffing, stock, and funding, all contribution to underuse, and there being no

motivation to improve budgets for an unused resource. Some things have improved over the past few years, as one can see from comparing two surveys by Her Majesty's Inspectorate. The first<sup>11</sup> found that school libraries generally "gave cause for concern" and that "most libraries were underused." The second<sup>12</sup> reported "encouraging signs of improvement" and noted that 57% were "used satisfactorily." So we can acknowledge some progress as we move from one decade to another.

It may even be that progress is partly dependent on reassessing some of the areas which were regarded as growth points of the 1980s. Were school librarians really wise to try to give particular prominence to their teaching role in order to gain status and recognition--a tactic described by Carroll as "an obsessive concern to prove their instructional worth"?<sup>13</sup> Was the information skills movement quite the breakthrough that we had hoped? Certainly the lack of information skills was apparent. It is summed up in the title of a Kent report on student use of the public library--*He Obviously Had No Idea What He Was Doing*.<sup>14</sup> It was reinforced by Carter and Monaco in *Learning Information Technology Skills*: "The majority of pupils and many teachers lacked the skills to locate, select, and use resources."<sup>15</sup>

Ralph Tabberer made the point tellingly in a conference presentation which used transcriptions of paired work by secondary school students, from which the following extracts are taken.

Mandy C watching Karen G

Karen is looking up questions on Quakers. She couldn't find one answer so she started to look up the ones on Baptists. She is very disorganized. I asked her what she was doing and she replied, "Looking for *Pilgrim's Progress*."

Alison X watching Angela Y

Angel first looked at all the letters on the sides of the shelves and she came across the letter Q. Several times she went backwards and forwards not taking out any books. She decided to give up on number one for that moment and went on to number two. Angel then went over to the subject index and tried to find *baptism*. She then went and got the new *Bible* and flicked through it unsuccessfully.

The lack of confidence among teachers has proved a major stumbling block. The comment of one could probably stand for many.

I feel such a fraud. I don't know much at all about note-taking and study skills, and I'm supposed to be an expert. There are so many points about this information thing that we've never really talked out.<sup>16</sup>

Honsell went on in his report to identify two perspectives of librarians that hindered development: concentration on "meticulous custodianship," and attempts to implement a "master plan for information skills." "This confuses a long-term objective with present strategy."

The information skills movement promised much to librarians, but by the end of the 1980s earlier hopes were being revised. Taberner at this time gave his impression of that movement being "an innovation contained" and my *Perspectives on a Partnership: Information Skills and School Libraries 1983-1988* concluded:

The information skills model has not proved the most fruitful for school libraries, and it is time to look at their other obligations and responsibilities.<sup>17</sup>

But if one begins to question these focal points from the 1980s, there are certainly development areas to occupy us through the '90s and, perhaps, beyond. The nature of school learning programs, including those consequent on central curricular change and initiatives such as the flexible learning movement, are--at least--bringing the school library into a central position. No longer is the school library a resource ahead of current pedagogy. My present research is showing that school libraries *are* major agencies of curriculum delivery, while *The Resource Implications of GCSE*<sup>18</sup> documented the very wide range of resources--maps, charts, statistical abstracts, CD-ROM items--needed for the new certificate, and now being provided in our multi-media libraries.

Then, information technology has enhanced the status of libraries as librarians have added new skills to their expertise and offered new services to their clients. As I visit schools, I so often see the library acting as the center of information technology applications: it's a success we often under-rate. The nature of school library staffing has changed, too. There are far more charter librarians in schools; training for teacher-librarians has improved; perhaps most important, links with senior

management teams are clearer, and there is therefore greater awareness of library issues at the management level.

There are still different views of the role of the school librarian and there are still librarians who are isolated from the mainstream of school concerns, but there has been a marked shift in emphasis from organization of materials to achievement of educational ideas, from administration to management. Margaret Meek helped us see the transition that was needed, in her observations of the school librarian's support of change in one British school.

...the librarian can be, indeed, mentally is, where the teacher's view of the task and the pupils' view of the task intersect... The librarian is at the heart of collaborative learning and must be seen to be so... I am persuaded that the librarian would rather be a colleague of specialist practitioners than a servant of specialist needs.<sup>19</sup>

It is significant that similar views can be found across the Atlantic, for example in Cleaver and Taylor's *Involving the School Library Media Specialist in Curriculum Development*.<sup>20</sup> I see curriculum closeness, this collaborative approach as a key to present and future effectiveness, and was reaching towards this perception in a 1986 article "Waiting for Connections."<sup>21</sup> In this I identified three stages of library development: in the first, we have the library seen essentially as a place; in the second, as a collection of resources; in the third, the library becomes a service organization.

In this third stage libraries not only have policies; they have programs. For school libraries the policies will start with the relationship to curricular objectives: the programs will seek to provide a continuing and cumulative educational experience, through readers' advisory service to individuals and through class or departmental work involving library materials, skills, and resources.

As we move through the 1990s we shall need to build on and extend this concept of the library as service organization. Past history shows that school libraries have not been fully effective as instruments of education. Today we have some ideas about the effective school library, but fewer leads as to how we bring about that change. We have neglected strategies for managing change, and it is that

area that I'd like to explore with you in the last part of this session.

### Strategies for managing change

There are many sources we can turn to for help in managing change--indeed change management represents a growth industry for writers and trainers. I have found particularly valuable books on school effectiveness, Susan Curzon's very practical *Managing Change: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Change in Libraries*, Caulfield and Schultz's *Planning for Change, A Guide to Strategic Planning in Local Government*<sup>23</sup>, and *Exploring Corporate Strategy*<sup>24</sup>, by Johnson and Scholes.

What all the books have in common are lists, and I am reminded of Arnold Lobel's story about dependency on lists, as Frog and Toad spend their whole day working through their lists.

"There," said Toad. "Now my day is all crossed out!"

"I am glad," said Frog. Then Frog and Toad went to sleep.

Bringing about change is, of course, complex and situation specific, but a framework helps, and I'll offer a simple one, based on three steps.

### Strategic Analysis

Here one reviews the external environment, resource strengths, aspirations, and values.

As Kotler commented:

The external environment is changing too fast for any organization to coast along hoping to do better without engaging in concrete analysis and planning.<sup>26</sup>

We have to be sensitive to opportunities in an increasingly turbulent environment, and to the expectations of those involved in our organization. You will read the signs differently in each country. For the United Kingdom, we must look to the implications of recent educational legislation, at the change in the balance of power between central and local government, and especially, at values permeating our society. They include belief in a market economy, a new customer orientation for public services, and a search for cost-effectiveness. Margaret Kinnell investigat-

ing public library management strategies for the 1990s, concluded:

The reality is that the culture in local government is moving, apparently inexorably, to a more business-like orientation.<sup>27</sup>

Within schools the same forces are at work. Schools have been placed in the situation of competing with one another, which has resulted in the marketing of schools becoming important. Greater power resides with governors and parents and allocation of budgets is now decided at school level--which means the library may gain or lose. Accountability and pupil entitlement are key concepts, which translate into more precise standards and monitoring systems, and adherence to a national curriculum with common programs of study. However, in spite of the move to uniformity consequent on the Education Reform Act of 1988, each school has its own culture, traditions, and value systems which our analysis must include.

When you come to analyze the resource strengths and weaknesses of your library, you may do well to call in an outside specialist, perhaps staff of the local school library support service, to help, for it is very difficult to be objective about one's own work. Included here are core questions such as:

What business are we in?

Who are our customers, and what do they want?

What are we trying to achieve?

What are the constraints within which we operate?

You may be able to draw on a local handbook of library evaluation, of the kind now produced by several English Local Education Authorities, for example, Devon's *Resources for Learning*.<sup>28</sup> The advice on curriculum audit in the very clear guide, *Planning for School Development*<sup>29</sup> is also relevant here.

### Strategic choice

If we are about change, we are also about development and improvement--which are not necessarily about increased budgets, although they may have financial implications. Bearing this in mind, the analysis should lead to generation of options for future work, and the next stage is to weigh these and decide between them. It may well be that the decision is not yours, but is for the senior management team

or board of governors. That's all to the good, for the higher the level of commitment one can achieve, the easier will be the process of change implementation. However, you will need to have some views on priorities as you compile your report.

The process of generating and weighing options is one that calls for both professional skills and personal judgment, and no handbook can replace these. I can just offer some observations based on the research I have just completed<sup>30</sup> and my current work. For school library support services, I identified four factors making for effectiveness, which may provide an initial framework for considering school library options.

**Committed and politically skilled leadership.** This involves a clear view of the library's mission, a clear linking with the school's mission, and a perception of the centers of power and energy within the school. The effective library forwards the school's aims: the politically skilled librarian therefore presents library options in terms of the school's priorities, while carrying the library team into the process of choice.

**Positive relationships with the funding body.** This brings us to words such as communication, consultation, and collaboration, areas which need a continuing effort. A formal committee may help. The relationship with the librarian's line manager is crucial, but one cannot rely on one single route. Rather, a network of contacts and methods is needed, including joint projects and initiatives, and participation in the social life of the school. A collegial approach to decision-making helps to foster strong relationships and combats the old problem of library isolation.

**Customer focus.** The new awareness of library customers probably represents the greatest change for United Kingdom school libraries, and should lead to a fundamental reassessment of service design and delivery, and a new marketing orientation. First, who are the library's customers? One option is to expand the customer base to include governors, parents, even the local community. Then, there is evidence that school libraries fail to engage in market segmentation, although, as Tom Peters has reminded us, success in the future will involve:

service to narrower market segments..., products ever more tailored to customer's particular needs.

Many librarians at present have little information about their present and potential customers. I have talked with some who do not even know the extent of library use. Customer focus requires better systems for information gathering and analysis--fortunately available through information technology--and the monitoring of customer satisfaction or an continuing basis.

**Dependable service of high quality.** This is no new requirement, but the emphasis on customer entitlement and accountability implies clearer work targets and methods of service evaluation. Again, outside support services can help here. Often, school librarians tell me of their problems meeting additional demands on a no-growth budget, a situation which can lead to a superficial level of service and a demoralized staff. It may be better, in these circumstances, to do less but do it better. Perhaps weak services should be pruned, existing services redesigned. Once we have embraced the idea of change, there can be a feeling of liberation from old ways. We can find some hints about areas needing particular attention in the last report of Her Majesty's Senior Chief Inspector of Schools, which notes:

In both primary and secondary schools library stocks are often poorly matched to the needs of the National Curriculum...[A] trend was teachers' failure to challenge pupils sufficiently: this was particularly the case in the teaching of less able pupils... Teachers need to pay more attention to advanced reading skills and to intervene more in guiding personal reading.<sup>32</sup>

### **Strategic implementation**

Some of the difficulties of change implementation have been touched on earlier in this session. Here I wish just to refer to three conditions which make for successful implementation of change.

### **Staffing**

Staff attitude to change is a vital factor in its success. The will to change is more important than financial resources. A 1990 study of certain effects of educational legislation identified three possible responses:

The preservative or status-quo model  
The minimalist model  
The consultative model.<sup>33</sup>

The last was seen as the most appropriate in the present social and political climate, but one can understand staff reacting defensively to change. We need to consider here our method of communicating, reaching decisions and training staff so they can sustain their new roles. As one senior librarian commented, "Whatever happens, take your team with you."

### Approach

We are, of course, not about change itself, but about improvement. While one can set out the steps of strategic management neatly, the process of implementation is one that requires risk and flair, not just analysis. Quinn has helped my own thinking here.

The most effective strategies...tend to emerge step by step from an iterative process in which the organization probes the future, experiments, and learns from a series of partial (incremental) commitments...<sup>34</sup>

We seek an open, flexible approach, which allows for experiments and failures, and makes space for the amendments characteristic of change implementation.

### Monitoring

The responsive library seeks feedback from customers, encouraging comments, inquiries, and suggestions. It will also devise criteria against which to evaluate the results of change.

We are united in wanting to improve the service our libraries give to the school community, and recognize that this involves change. In planning that change we try to understand the lessons of the past, the opportunities of the present and formulate strategies for the future. We can tell that teaching and learning are changing, and school libraries with them, but the pace of change is so rapid that it is hard to foretell the situation that the future holds. What we can do in this conference is to extend our understanding, strengthen our commitment to school library improvement, and explore strategies for managing change which will serve both the present and future.

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# The Power of Information Literacy: Unity of Education and Resources for the 21st Century

by

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## *Where My Books Go*

*All the words that I utter,  
And all the words that I write,  
Must spread out their wings untiring,  
and never rest in their flight*  
William Butler Yeats

## **An Information Society**

Given this audience of school librarians in an exquisitely beautiful country, it seems entirely appropriate to open today's session with the words of William Butler Yeats. With lyrical simplicity and an intuitive sense of vision, Yeats beckons us to listen thoughtfully and reflect. The verse might suggest that we have something worthwhile to say--that is for you to judge. But the verse is also a premonition of an information rich society. The urgency of responding effectively to that society is the focus of our presentation.

In just one short human generation, the primary work of the world has moved from the use of muscle to the use of machines, machines that move information rather than goods. We live in the age of the information revolution where the mass production of information and its technology predominate. The speed at which this has happened is quite extraordinary. For instance, it took 229 years between the invention of the Newcomen engine in 1708 to the emergence of the jet plane in 1937. It has taken only 36 years from the development of the first generation computer by Eckert and Mauchly in 1946 to fifth generation computers of the 1990s that mirror the neural communications ability of the human brain. The information revolution has occurred some 6.5 times faster than the power revolution. And there are signs that the information intensity of our commercial and social environment is increasing. Ninety percent of all scientific

knowledge to date has been generated in the last 30 years, and the existing volume of knowledge is expected to double in the next ten to fifteen years. (Masuda, 1981: 42-45) In the past decade alone, measurement of the information revolution on almost any dimension--numbers, capacity, speed, or cost--is described not in mere percentages, but in factors of three, ten, or more. We hear of the gap between populations of third world countries and their inability to feed themselves, and we hear of the ever increasing assaults made on our planet, but no dimension of human affairs, including populations or depredations of the environment, seems to have grown or changed so rapidly as information. (Bankes & Builder, 1992: 4) Commentators in sociology, education, government, business, and industry assert that ours is indeed an information society, a society without any historical precedent.

The future is one of multimedia and hypermedia technology combining artificial intelligence, voice, text, and image; it is one of electronic neighborhoods of information exchange crossing boundaries between culture, education, work, leisure, and personal development, and pervading every aspect of our lives. It is also one of uncertainty and change with unpredictable trajectories and tensions. Such rapid transformations of our past and present must encourage us today, as educators and information professionals, to question our future.

It is our firm belief that education for the 21st century must be education for an information society. The current scope and pace of change demand that we develop the flexibility to respond rapidly and creatively to new parameters imposed on us by the information society, and to develop the ability to act proactively to capture opportunities being created by these changes. There is an increasingly urgent need to rethink and text structure

education processes within an information framework in order to provide existing and future students with the attitudes, knowledge and skills they will use and apply in their public and private roles as members of an information society.

"By the year 2000, today's children will be completing tertiary education and be part of a very different 21st century work force. They will be entering an information age which will require them to analyze and interpret information, to present it to others in various forms, and to form opinions and to make judgements and decisions from a wide variety of sources. They will need to be prepared to work cooperatively and productively in flexible ways and be ready to accommodate change in all aspects of life. A new set of basic learning skills will be needed to equip them to live in this changing world. Creativity and innovation must be fostered and allowed to flourish." (Vogler, 1990: 101)

As school librarians, we are in fact the prime movers. In the context of our unique and dynamic roles as educators and information specialists in our schools, we are both a symbol of the dynamic link between learning and information, and key facilitators of unifying education and resources. Both are to be prized within our schools.

It will be useful to articulate this role a little more carefully by examining how ideas and thinking about education and information have changed, and from there, examine how our role has changed. One way of doing this is to focus on the assumptions, values and beliefs that have substantially shaped and guided educational practice and the provision of information in the past, and the shift that is currently taking place in these arenas. The following study of the shifting paradigms in education and information are synthesized from the collective research of Ferguson and Dervin and Nilan.

The shift in educational focus is from teacher/content-centered learning to student/process-centered learning, and the shift in the role of the school library is from a storehouse of resources to a dynamic, student-oriented resource-based learning center where students play an active role in resourcing their own learning. In an information society, learners can no longer be viewed as robotic information processors where information is poured into them like empty vessels.

This shift in world views has important

implication for the role of the school librarian into the 21st century. Essentially the role focuses on developing a dynamic and responsive information environment and fostering learners to be active and autonomous in their learning, to question, to explore, to seek, to contend, and to create new meaning from information so that they can grow toward maturity and independence in an information society. This is an awesome role, and an awesome responsibility. It is the role of bringing together education and information so that students have the understanding, capabilities, confidence and skills vital to surviving in an information society and to being able to make a value-based contribution to this society.

### **Information Literacy**

What we are talking about is *information literacy*. Information literacy is the ability to use information purposefully and effectively. It is a wholistic, interactive learning process encompassing the skills of defining, locating, selecting, organizing, presenting, and evaluating information from sources including books and other media, experiences and people, being able to consider it in the light of current knowledge, adding it to a store of knowledge, and applying this knowledge capably and confidently to solve information needs. Students who are information literate thus develop confidence and control over their lives. They not only shape their own lives, but also contribute to the lives of others. (Kirk, Poston-Anderson, Yerbury, 1990: 2-3)

Information literacy involves the process of:

- defining the tasks for which information is needed
- locating appropriate sources of information to meet needs
- selecting and recording relevant information from sources
- understanding and appreciating information from several sources, and being able to combine and organize it effectively for best application
- presenting the information learned in an appropriate way
- evaluating the outcomes in terms of task requirements and increases in knowledge.

Information and information literacy are at the core of all learning, and thus central to the educative process. Information literacy is the essential link between learners and information

## Paradigms of Education and School Libraries

### Traditional View of Education

- \* emphasis on content, acquiring a body of "right information" once and for all
- \* teacher imparts content - a one-way street; teaching is talking, learning is listening
- \* learning is a product, a destination
- \* hierarchical and authoritarian structure where conformity is rewarded and difference is discouraged
- \* relatively rigid structure with prescribed curriculum that emphasis "appropriate ages" for certain activities
- \* primary reliance on theoretical "abstract" book knowledge
- \* classroom designed for teaching efficiency and convenience
- \* bureaucratically determined; resistant to community input

### Traditional view of Information Provision

- \* information is viewed as objective, "bricks" of information with constant meaning
- \* library focuses on delivery of information - getting information into the hands of students
- \* users of information are passive recipients of information - the "destination" of information
- \* individuality is seen as chaotic; minimum service to maximum numbers
- \* information fits each person exactly the same way; individual's response to information conforms to expected group response
- \* emphasis on provision of "neutral" information
- \* libraries designed as storerooms for books; convenience of storage rather than convenience of users
- \* passive approach to the development of services tailored to specific learning needs; little feedback from users on appropriateness of resources and services

## 21st Century View of Education

- \* emphasis on learning how to learn, how to ask questions, to be open and to evaluate new concepts, have access to information; what is "known" may change
- \* learning is a process, a journey; learners make decisions about their learning
- \* learning context is important
- \* encourages autonomy and independent learning; develops student responsibility for learning, confidence, and self reliance
- \* educational structures are flexible; many approaches to learning and teaching
- \* flexibility and integration of age groupings - individual not automatically limited to certain subject matter by age
- \* theoretical and abstract knowledge complimented by experiment and experience, both in and out of the classroom
- \* concern for the environment of learning that is responsive to the needs of learners
- \* encourages community input, even community control
- \* teacher is a learner too - learning is a shared environment
- \* egalitarian structure where candor is permitted; students and teachers see each other as people, not roles

## 21st Century View of School Libraries

- \* information creates meaning and understanding, enables learners to make sense of their situations; meaning varies from person to person
- \* learner is actively involved in information transfer and does something with the information to satisfy learning needs
- \* information is understood and utilized according to the learner's existing knowledge and situation
- \* the learner is an active information processor and decision maker
- \* information seeking behaviors of learners vary from individual to individual
- \* the need for learners to have access to information appropriate to their abilities, interests and needs
- \* education for information literacy is valued
- \* library is vital link between learners and resources which they need to develop their potential
- \* satisfying learner's needs are important; feedback is essential
- \* collaborative approaches between teacher and school librarian to develop information literacy

(Based on Dervin & Nilan, 1986, and Ferguson, 1981)

resources provided by school libraries. It is this link that which will empower learning for the 21st century; it is what will enable students to take charge of their own learning; it is what guarantees unity of education and resources for the 21st century. And in doing so, it gives power to transform work, personal performance and leisure and to raise the quality of life.

### Curriculum Response

Already educational systems are taking up the information literacy challenge. One of the key goals of the "National Curriculum of New Zealand" being prepared by the New Zealand Ministry of Education is to "give students access to the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to participate effectively and productively in society and in the economy." It identifies seven categories of essential skills and qualities to be developed by all learners and integrated into all curricular areas. These are: communication skills, numeracy skills, social skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills, self management skills, work and study skills, and information skills.

In September 1991 a landmark document was tabled in the Australian Parliament. The report, "Australia as an Information Society," asserts that access to information is fundamental to our democratic freedom, to the transformation of our economy, and to the delivery of social justice to all citizens--in other words, to our very survival. It recommends that particular attention be paid to the development of information literacy and skills associated with the use of information and information technology, and that these be integrated into curriculum at all levels of education--primary and secondary--and including teacher education. In addition, the Australian Education Council Review Committee has recently recommended that the following skills should underpin the national curriculum:

### collecting, analyzing and organizing of ideas and information:

- defining the purposes and audience for which information is collected
- being able to find and use a variety of sources of information
- choosing appropriate means for collecting and organizing information
- organizing information clearly and logically
- interpreting and analyzing information and ideas
- selecting information and evaluating its

suitability for use in a particular context

- transforming information from one form to another

### expressing information and ideas to others

- choosing appropriate means to express information
- demonstrating presentation skills
- evaluating the effectiveness of communication

And much closer to home--ours, that is. New South Wales is now recognized as Australia's leading state in the education of information skills. In 1988 the Department of Education released a policy document *Information Skills in the School* to be implemented in government schools by all teachers. The document's sound philosophical basis, its clear articulation of the information skills process (Appendix A), and its nature as a working tool for the planning and teaching of information in primary and secondary schools has gained acceptance across Australia. New curricula and grading systems in New South Wales now incorporate information skills in their documentation.

The National Catholic Education Commission, the largest non-government educational system in Australia with some 1,700 schools and some 600,000 students, is responsible for developing, co-ordinating, and implementing educational policy for Catholic schools in Australia. Its curriculum statement also asserts a skills-based approach to learning:

- to give opportunities to develop the full potential of the human person
- to acknowledge and cater for the diversity of ways in which people learn
- to encourage independent thinking and critical skills and the continuing search for truth
- to encourage a critical participation in our society

(N.C.E.C. Report, 1991: 43)

"So what?" you might say. What we are seeing is a shift from information skills being the domain of the library to the domain of the curriculum. This does not diminish the role of the school library, but revitalizes it in the context of the whole school.

As school librarians, this is our future, this is our vision. How do we make it a reality? The dream, at a school level, is to make information literacy the pulse, the very heart beat and

sustaining power of the curriculum--to integrate information skills into the curriculum. We are, and must be key players in this dream because we are the ones in the school with information expertise. We must ensure that the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to use information effectively are learned as part of the curriculum of the school. We would like to focus now on how it can, and is being done at the grassroots level - in one school.

### **One School's Response: Action Research, 1991**

For two years now an action research project has been under way at Marist Sisters' College of Sydney. This research has attempted to place information literacy at the center of the curriculum. It has not been an easy journey with obstacles and apprehensions expressed by all those involved. In a sense our motivation has come from the very meaning of the word *educate*. The latin root of the verb is *educare*: to draw out or lead out. We are committed to education that is not a piling up of information, but rather a developing of the latent potential of each student's capacity to learn. We can facilitate students' learning by designing and orchestrating the circumstances which enable them to learn for themselves. Information skills are the key to developing the active, responsible role students have to play in their own learning and as responsive, autonomous decision makers in society.

In this project, the school librarian, Celeste McNicholas, has been a key player. Begun in 1991, the project's broad objective was to establish in the school a commitment to the practice of integrating information skills into the curriculum and to facilitate this by collaborative planning and teaching. The project sought to set up an infrastructure in the school to implement the process and develop and implement strategies to widen the base on which information skills were practiced in the school.

In essence we wanted to take this notion of information skills outside the domain of the library and school librarian and to put it in a wider context in which it was owned by teachers. Initially this entailed an enormous investment of time, but eventually high returns were reaped. The details of our work in 1991 are presented briefly here. A full report will appear in the *School Librarian* to be published in November.

The project was built around Havelock's

model of the change agent. (Appendix B) Its basis is a range of change agent activities--*promoting, informing, demonstrating, training, servicing, and nurturing* to bring about responses of *creating awareness, interest, a willingness to evaluate the process, to trial, to test, to Adopt*. The model recognizes that full acceptance and adoption of new ideas rarely come when individuals first face the prospect of change. It encourages people to move forward, to test, experience, trial, and assess in order to build a commitment to practice. Rather than imposing a school-wide policy from the top down, we began at the grassroots level, working with individual teachers in the classroom to develop a commitment to information skills.

The change model was implemented through a number of strategies:

#### **1. establishing an interdisciplinary planning team**

The team was made up of the school librarian and individual teachers with some information skills experience, and served as a nucleus for planing and implementing the model. It meant that teachers and not just the school librarian owned the process right from the start.

#### **2. holding regular meetings**

We met regularly at a fixed time on a weekly basis. Meetings wee kept informal and fun.

#### **3. identifying strengths**

We took time to identify the strengths of the school community and used these to promote the importance of a curriculum-based approach to information skills. The school is receptive to new ideas and these are openly fostered and supported by the school principal. This support is of great importance in that the whcle information literacy issue is seen as something beyond the particular interest of the library. This inspired us to plan with a certain boldness and to keep moving forward.

#### **4. clarifying the problems**

We took time to identify real and perceived barriers that teachers saw as problems in terms of integrating information skills in the classroom. Through lengthy discussions with teachers, we developed a profile of "where they were" in terms of practice commitment, enabling us to identify barriers which we then translated into needs

We found four levels of commitment to information skills:

**Resistance:** Teachers at this level say

information skills as very time consuming. They liked their classroom autonomy and saw co-operative teaching as threatening. They were very uncertain and apprehensive about the process.

**Curiosity:** Teachers at this stage thought information skills were a good idea but didn't value them in practice. They were willing to attempt innovative ideas but lacked direction - where to start and how to do it. They also felt uncomfortable with someone else in the classroom.

**Acceptance:** Teachers at this stage were those who had some successes with integrating information skills into the classroom, and who were quite happy to work alongside the school librarian. They shared their successes with their colleagues. They still felt pressured to cover content in a given time and still had some reservations about this process.

**Commitment:** Teachers at this stage were committed to teaching information skills in their subject fields. They were not intimidated by teaching in front of the school librarian and were willing to share their successes and failures. They also took initiatives in educating their fellow teachers.

Most teachers at the project school fit into levels one and two. Knowing this enabled us to identify their real fears, barriers, and needs, and to develop strategies to meet these. We could target likely candidates with higher probability of success; we could develop a sense of timing; and we could act strategically knowing what objections might be raised. In essence, we found we could give more appropriate guidance and be prepared for rejection.

### 5. practicing what we preach

To address the barriers and problems of teachers, we implemented two important strategies within the framework of the model to facilitate individual teachers through phases.

First, the *Demonstrate, Show, and Train* phases of the model were accomplished by implementing and developing a large scale team teaching program in the school to demonstrate first hand to the rest of the school staff the educational value of having a co-operative information skills approach integrated into the curriculum. This was done in the junior high school science program over a ten-week period with the science teacher and school librarian team teaching together. It was deliberately designed to be a showpiece, a basis for teachers to discuss, observe, and question, and they certainly did so. It generated much enthusiasm

and interest and particularly has encouraged many in the school "to give it a go." The outcome has been a solid and growing commitment in 1992 to a total school practice commitment to integrating information skills into the curriculum.

Second, we developed a planning and lesson sequencing model to *Train, Help, Serve, and Nurture* teachers in the process. (Appendix C) This is a simple, adaptable way of bringing together the teacher and school librarian in a planning process that has students at the center.

This model is a way of negotiating the lesson planning process to ensure that information skills are developed and integrated. It helps clarify planning and teaching roles and forms the basis for committed successful teaching. It helps teaching sequences planned in programs to be designed as integrated units. We have found that it can be applied to planning a single lesson as well as small or large scale units. Teachers have commented that it helps them over the perception that information skills are time consuming.

### Action Research, 1992

In 1992, we wished to consolidate on the gains made in 1991. Of greater concern was our curiosity about the impact of information skills on learning. Does integrating information skills into the curriculum make a positive impact on student learning, and if so, what are the implications for teaching? Essentially this is an unexplored domain of learning, and became our focus this year.

Our objectives for 1992 were: to consolidate gains of 1991 and extend information skills into other curriculum areas in the school; to undertake some descriptive research in order to begin assessing the impact of information skills on learning; to identify variables that appear to be interacting in the learning process so as to form the basis for more controlled, systematic measurement in 1993; and to use preliminary findings as a basis for further extending information skill in the school.

### Methodology

Rather than specific research questions to answer or hypotheses to test, qualitative research techniques were used to gather data. In order to illuminate the inner dynamics of learning situations, we felt that participant perspectives and action could be best understood when observed in the setting in which

they occur. Thus data were collected in actual classrooms. An open-ended approach was used to enable students to answer from their own frame of reference rather than from one structured by specific, prearranged questions. Lengthy participant observation and in-depth interviewing based on loosely structured interview guides were used so that students could express their thoughts, yet focus and direction were kept. Written course evaluations, assignments, attitude surveys, and test scores were also used. While it is recognized that there is controversy over qualitative procedures resulting in "soft" data rich in description but not easily handled by statistical procedures, there was a concern for capturing the subjects' own way of interpreting impact and significance as accurately as possible. The use of a range of sources of data was seen to enhance reliability and validity of the study. Observations took place over a six-month period, and interviews took place over a two-week period toward the end of that time. The outside researcher was known to the students.

### Sample

One hundred and ten students, both in class groups and small groups, were interviewed. All of these students from years 7, 9, and 11, had at least four months involvement in learning programs where information skills were integrated into subject content, with teaching sequences taught by both classroom teachers and the school librarian. The method of sampling used was purposeful sampling. The students were chosen because they were believed to be able to provide the richness and complexity of data required to build up a descriptive picture and comprehensive understanding of the impact of information skills on their learning. Eight teachers involved in teaching information skills were also interviewed. This group included teachers very experienced with information skills as well as teachers new to the process.

### Analysis of Data

Rather than searching out evidence to prove specific hypotheses, we set out to build up abstractions from the data--essentially building up a picture of the impact of information skills on learning from many disparate yet interconnected pieces of collected evidence. Interpreting and making sense of the collected materials was a monumental task. Initially this involved a broad though careful analysis to identify focus

areas and patterns. This generated several focus categories that formed the basis for analyzing and synthesizing the data. This was followed by scrutinizing descriptions carefully and judging the category to which the materials pertained, recognizing overlaps and adjusting focus categories.

### Impact of Information Skills on Student Learning: Findings

The findings as presented here are preliminary, and represent an impact over a short period of time. They are encouraging, challenging, and perhaps a little frightening particularly in view of their bold implications for a change at the teaching level.

### Impact on perception of self as a person and as a learner

Students were not all reluctant to convey their perceptions. The "adulthood" and depth of their feelings logically and confidently speak of a growing sense of personal worth and self-respect, and an improved self-perception.

- **vehicle for self-expression and active participation.** Students expressed greater confidence in asking appropriate questions, in answering questions with less uncertainty, and in listening and observing more carefully. In being able to respond more confidently, their contribution to teaching strategies was more open and active.
- **mechanism for self-analysis.** Students were more able to reflect inwardly on their own learning progress, to diagnose their learning needs in terms of the progress they had made with information, to express these needs more confidently, and to strive to refining the skills where necessary. A commitment to "want to learn" and a respect for learning in its own right were expressed, and this was linked clearly to the ability to cope with learning difficulties.
- **enhanced self-esteem.** This was particularly expressed by one of the Year 9 science classes. The science classes are graded, and this one is the lowest stream. This group had been initially differentiated by their low motivation for learning, low achievement, and low self-esteem. Their enhanced self-esteem was quite obvious--they were exuberant, excited, and happy about their progress. Perhaps the most refreshing thing is that they were actually looking forward to their mid-term science test because they wanted to demonstrate

what and how much they had learned. Their sense of pride and their believing in their own ability, and their recognition of themselves as acceptable students gave them new found freedom. They were liberated from a fear of failure to a keenness (that surprised even them) to demonstrate their success. The personal struggle with the stigma of being labelled "dumb" had hurt them considerably, and their growing freedom was a real joy to observe.

- **sense of self-control.** The Year 9 students in particular were willing to admit that their own behavior in the past had been problematic; that their frustrations were linked to having neither the skills to make sense of and take control of their learning; nor the power of confidence to seek clarification. They willingly acknowledged that their classroom behavior is much more positive now and that they are different students. Their self-control was also shown in the maturity of their responses. Without any instructions on our part to do so, they were careful to keep their comments about past teaching strategies anonymous and respectful, though frank.
- **independence and self-reliance.** One student expressed, "I am more dependent on myself now." Information skills were seen to place emphasis on taking responsibility for learning and learning from mistakes. Students admitted that this did not come easy, that there were some struggle. "We want to have answers fed to us because we are used to it, but we wouldn't be using our brains."
- **positive attitudes.** As well as having a more positive attitude to content areas, students projected an awareness that information skills enabled them to learn at a deeper level, and gave them confidence to explore the unknown. Coupled with this sense of discovery was a sense of achievement. In Year 9 where antagonism with learning tasks had been expressed prior to the skills program, students concerns now were far more academic in terms of the process, and specifically in terms of refining their skills to keep on track with the content. The overall maturity of students' responses was quite extraordinary. Over the learning program, students' attitudes shifted from one of overt blaming of others for their learning problems, to an inward acceptance of owning the responsibility of

developing their own skills.

- **honesty.** The openness and honesty concerning their own learning are suggestive of an ownership of learning and valuing of the information skills process.

### Impact on the Process of Learning

In all classes surveyed, students were aware that the skills of defining, locating, selecting, organizing, presenting and evaluating information were being developed in the context of the curriculum content.

- **charting learning progress.** Students saw the skills as enabling them to map out more precisely what they already knew in order to more effectively decide what they needed to know. One student expressed it in terms of enabling her "to need to know what I don't know."
- **time.** Students experiencing the process consistently claimed that they understood more subject content in a shorter time. This is in sharp contrast to the perspective of teachers who are reluctant to be involved in information skills--their expectation is that information skills are time consuming and do not enable content to be covered in the set time.
- **more accepting of learning as a challenge.** Students were able to identify the challenge that the process presents, and to accept the challenge rather than taking the easy way out. They viewed learning as "doing," and saw active participation as being critical to successful learning. The skills added a faith-dimension to learning--they were confident that they would manage the task, even though it initially seemed quite daunting.
- **learning as a structured process.** Students claimed that by breaking down tasks into information skills-related phases and systematically applying these phases to the completion of the task, they were more able to effectively organize their ideas. They found that the skills gave them greater flexibility to their inquiry and a greater focus on the task and on remaining true to it. They expressed a sense of control over the information and a sense of confidence in manipulating and rearranging the information. Some students even expressed the view that these processes were happening quite unconsciously now.
- **vocabulary control.** Students seemed to use information skills terminology with ease

and understanding, particularly when attempting to clarify their immediate learning problem. Some could step into the information skills modes at word stimulus. There was a perception of unity in learning when teachers in other subjects used the same terms. Because all teachers were not using the same terminology, the inconsistency generated some problems; for example, some students were hesitant to seek clarification even though they recognized that they should have.

- **responsibility for learning.** There seems to be an emerging awareness that each information skill is important to the learning process, and the recognition that any difficulty with any skill requires that they are responsible for doing something about it.
- **identifying learning weaknesses.** The personal valuing of each skill as important to learning appears to have sharpened the students' ability to identify their weaknesses in applying skills. Typical comments were: "I should do more work on defining because I have difficulty doing that." "I need to work on listening because I block out very easily." "I need speaking skills. I say things I don't really want to say if I could just get to the point, but I can't without saying something else."
- **managing the quantity of information.** Students indicated that learning to plan all aspects of the task enabled them to deal more adequately with the quantity of information they were able to locate and to manage their time accordingly. It also allowed them to work more effectively at their own pace.

#### **Impact on view of information**

- **more global view of information.** While students saw the school library and the school librarian as immediate sources of information, they did not equate information solely with the school library. Information skills were not viewed as location-specific "library skills."
- **lateral information seeking.** Some students had become active seekers of information beyond the library, using people, realia, and a variety of community agencies as sources. They also respected themselves as sources of information because they were learning to identify what they did know, and they were seeking

information internally before seeking externally.

#### **Impact on learning outcomes**

It is recognized that systematic research is essential in order to demonstrate the impact of information skills on learning outcomes. Some clear trends emerge that indicate information skills add a powerful dimension to learning.

- **meaningful learning.** The less able group of Year 9 students consistently emphasized that they understood the subject content they were learning. Increased meaning, precision of meaning, and an improved ability to express what they had learned in their own words with greater clarity and understanding was motivational for them. They expressed greater interest in science and a much more positive attitude toward it. This change was dramatically apparent when compared to attitudes assessment test given at the commencement of the subject. Students saw that applying the skills helped them make sense of science, and that they were actually "comfortable" with the subject.
- **develop reflective thinking.** Students indicated that the skills of selecting and organizing information helped them separate trivial from significant information, and encouraged them to assess more critically the information rather than merely "copying it from encyclopedias."
- **improved memory.** The less able students expressed surprise at their ability to remember subject content. Improved short-term and long-term memory were evident in class tests and quizzes. As one student said, "We use our brains a heap more."
- **increased concentration and focus on the task.** Students saw this as a direct outcome of understanding what they were doing. Because they understood ideas, they were able to relate ideas, and to focus on ideas with greater clarity and for longer periods of time.
- **develop skills of self-directed, autonomous learning.** Students clearly associated the skills with sense making, giving them more control over what they were reading, and giving them a sense of confidence in manipulating and arranging information when they were working on their own without direct supervision or immediately available help. Some senior

students were already applying the skills to the planning of work to be done during the school holidays.

- **transfer of learning.** There is some evidence of transfer of skills to other problem-solving activities such as summarizing skills used in English, to coping with examinations, and to experiences beyond the classroom. Year 11 students saw the application to the Higher School Certificate examinations and university study. Some students were able to identify specific applications beyond the subject content, for example, using key words and idea mapping to solve problems in English. While there appears to be a growing sense of projected usefulness of these skill and valuing of their role, some students were not fully confident yet to transfer the skills. "I'm reluctant to use these elsewhere depending on the way teachers perceive me." There is an implication here that students act our oles to match teachers' perceptions.
- **exchange of ideas.** This has been one of the most obvious and encouraging outcomes, and especially so with reluctant learners. Students seem more willing to exchange viewpoints and to initiate class discussion where meaning is discussed, negotiated and applied. Students admit that they have acquired a certain boldness in identifying missing links and misunderstandings, though they are still reluctant to carry these skill over to classes where teacher-centered strategies are employed. This confirms our belief of the need for all teachers to be consistently using skills as a framework for subject content.
- **improved test scores.** Mastery of content is evident in school test scores.

### Impact on the learning environment

Students were able to pinpoint their own role in creating a meaningful learning environment in the classroom, and to recognize that a productive, information-centered learning environment is a collaborative effort between teacher, school librarian, and student.

- **atmosphere of respect.** Students sense that their responses are valued, and that they can challenge their learning without being fearful of the consequences. This motivates them to actively contribute to skills-oriented classes. In fact, one would assume that their responses have always been valued, but the important thing is now

that the students offer responses as ones of value.

- **collaboration.** Students in Year 7 drew parallels with shared learning and the concept of "Committee of Inquiry" they had been dealing with in subject content. There was a certain cohesion and collaboration evident in the classes; a respect for one another; brighter students were less condescending toward less able students; and there was a pastoral effect shown in a demonstrated caring for one another. This was particularly so with the less able students of Year 9 who were proud of the change in the classroom climate. The impact is suported by teachers working with information skills for the first time--they saw themselves as learners together with the students. Students perceived the teacher as a "helper," at the same time recognizing their ow role: "You have to identify your problems first before you can ask for help."
- **identifying needs.** Students stressed the importance of teachers knowing what skills they had acquired and what they needed to have to successfully complete learning tasks. What students seemed to be implying was that there is a danger in making incorrect assumptions about students abilities because it has a negative impact on meaningful learning. Some students even indicated that some research tasks set by teachers not involved with information skills were inappropriate because they demanded skills they didn't have or that questions asked were inappropriate to the answers sought. Students were not in anyway setting themselves up as judges in this process; rather, they were expecting a structure to the tasks that would enable them to apply the skills and work through the tasks in order to learn.
- **interest.** All students indicated that a skills approach reduced boredom, and added greater vitality and interest to their classes.
- **timing of skills.** Students in upper classes emphasized the importance of having these skills introduced and supported by all classroom teachers early in their schooling. "If we had started earlier, it wouldn't be a shock now to make decisions. We should be thankful you gave it to us now," and interestingly, "If we were more equipped with these skills from a younger

age, we could more easily deal with personalities."

### Impact on the Teaching Process: Perceptions of Teachers

The following findings synthesize the views of teachers who have worked with information skills in the classroom.

- **time.** Teachers indicated that time is saved, both in preparation and in the time taken to deliver prescribed content in class. The process provides a "reusable" framework that can easily be transferred to other tasks in other classes. Essentially, information skills enables more effective use of time and speeds up the process of teaching and learning.
- **responsive management.** The process facilitates the handling of large groups of students while allowing for students to work at their own level of ability. Even in large classes, it enables the teacher to be more responsive to individual learning needs. The consistency of terminology across groups reduces language problems when dealing with multicultural groups.
- **sequencing of content.** Teachers indicated that they were able to more clearly sequence the subject content of individual lessons. It also provided more effective conceptualizing of units of work and course programs. The process is an in-built mechanism for ensuring that false assumptions about the students have not been made.
- **presentation of content.** With greater clarity and direction in the planning stages, there is more effective presentation at the level demanded by both the syllabus and ability of students. The process is seen as providing students with skills to discover and deal with new knowledge rather than "spoon-feeding" them.
- **added vitality to teaching.** Teachers found the process energizing, keeping them on top of all students demands, and alert and focused on teaching. There seems to be a growing value of giving responsibility back to students for their learning with roles perceived more in terms of helper or facilitator.
- **professional rewards.** With a more confident style of teaching, teachers felt that the process made them feel "good" as a teacher, promoting a higher enjoyment factor.

- **more effective assessment.** Teachers indicated that the process made devising assessment criteria for student tasks easier, enabled a clear differentiation of learning performance, and helped in providing clearer feedback to students in terms of what they know, how much they have learned, and how much they could learn.

- **hard work.** Initially teachers found information skills hard work in the classroom. As experience grows, implementing the process is easy, and almost automatic. Teachers indicated that one of the most difficult aspects was dealing with skeptical colleagues.

Not all teachers share the above enthusiasm for information skills. Understanding their perceptions is the starting point for maintaining a productive teaching and learning environment where viewpoints can be exchanged and discussed, benefits celebrated and misconceptions clarified. This will continue to be the focus of our work in 1993.

### Conclusion

The findings speak for themselves. Information literacy brings together education and information resources in a dynamic way to guarantee meaningful student learning. It is an empowering force that gives students freedom to solve their problems and take action. It is a purposeful, sense-making approach to integrating books and other media into the curriculum. And as a force for educational excellence, it empowers school librarians and classroom teachers to focus on the larger issues of educating for lifelong information use. This is our future. We are on the threshold of a new era in education in which information literacy is the very heart. We believe that we can do anything we choose. In the play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the Comte de Guiche reminds Cyrano that "windmills, if you fight with them, may swing around their huge arms and cast you down into the mire." A defiant Cyrano, maybe speaking for all school librarians, replies, "or up among the stars!" We want to be up with the stars, and indeed, we can be. It is up to us to seize the moment.

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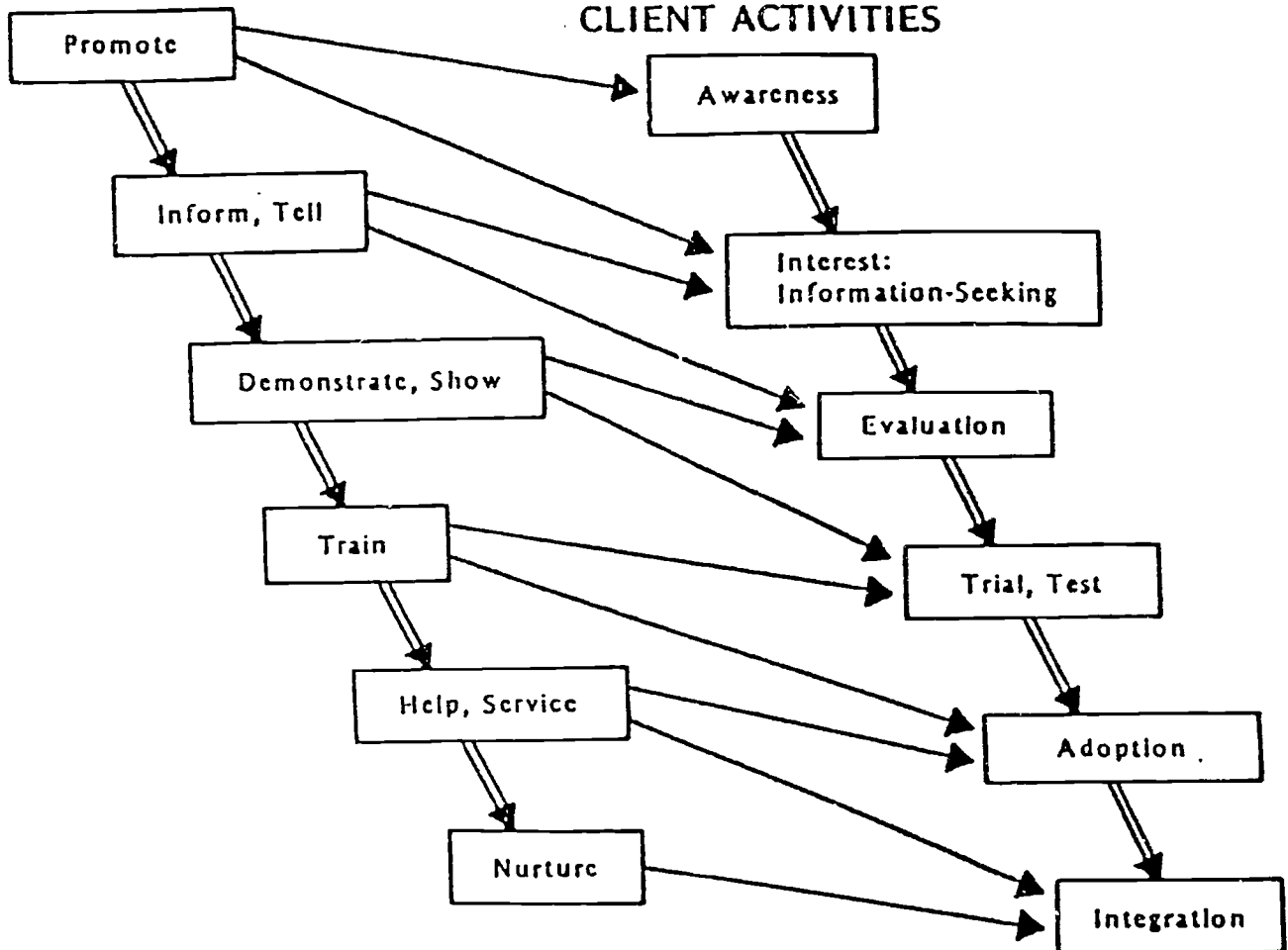
# APPENDIX A

THE INFORMATION PROCESS		
Steps in the process		Information skills
<b>Defining</b> <p>What do I really want to find out?            What is my purpose?            Why do I need to find this out?            What are the key words and ideas of the task?            What do I need to do?</p>		Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relate the task to their learning</li> <li>• clarify the meanings of the words of the task</li> <li>• identify and interpret key words and ideas in the task</li> <li>• state the task in their own words</li> <li>• work out the parts of the task</li> </ul>
<b>Locating</b> <p>Where can I find the information I need?            What do I already know?            What do I still need to find out?            What sources and equipment can I use?</p>		Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recall relevant information and skills from previous experience</li> <li>• recognise strengths and limitations of current knowledge and decide whether additional information and/or skills are needed</li> <li>• limit an investigation to a manageable size</li> <li>• identify possible sources (people, organisations, places, print, nonprint materials, objects)</li> <li>• recognise the relative worth of sources</li> <li>• select the best of these sources to use</li> <li>• locate sources and appropriate equipment</li> <li>• use appropriate equipment</li> <li>• record details of sources that are used</li> </ul>
<b>Selecting</b> <p>What information do I really need to use?            What information can I leave out?            How relevant is the information I have found?            How credible is the information I have found?            How will I record the information I need?</p>		Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• begin to assess the usefulness of each source</li> <li>• use key words to locate potentially useful information within sources</li> <li>• skim each source for information</li> <li>• identify information that has links with the task</li> <li>• assess and respect privacy and ownership of information</li> <li>• decide what to do about deficiencies within information</li> <li>• decide whether information is closer to fact or opinion</li> <li>• assess the credibility of sources which express opinion</li> <li>• identify inconsistency and bias in sources</li> <li>• devise a system for recording their own information</li> <li>• summarise information</li> <li>• record quotations and sources of information</li> </ul>
<b>Organising</b> <p>How can I best use this information?            Have I enough information for my purpose?            Do I need to use all this information?            How can I best combine information from different sources?</p>		Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the purpose of the task</li> <li>• combine the information into larger units of information</li> <li>• combine the units of information into a structure</li> <li>• review the structure in light of the purpose of the task</li> <li>• adjust the structure where necessary</li> </ul>
<b>Presenting</b> <p>How can I present this information?            What will I do with this information?            With whom will I share this information?</p>		Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the requirements of different forms of presentation</li> <li>• consider the nature of the audience for the presentation</li> <li>• select a form and style of presentation appropriate to the audience and the content of the material</li> <li>• prepare the presentation</li> <li>• present the information</li> </ul>
<b>Assessing</b> <p>What did I learn from this?            Did I fulfil my purpose?            How did I go — with each step of the information process?            How did I go — presenting the information?            Where do I go from here?</p>		Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the extent to which the end product meets the requirements of the task</li> <li>• assess their use of this process in completing the task</li> <li>• examine strengths and weaknesses in specific information skills</li> <li>• identify increases in knowledge</li> <li>• set personal goals for the further development of information skills</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B

### CHANGE AGENT ACTIVITIES

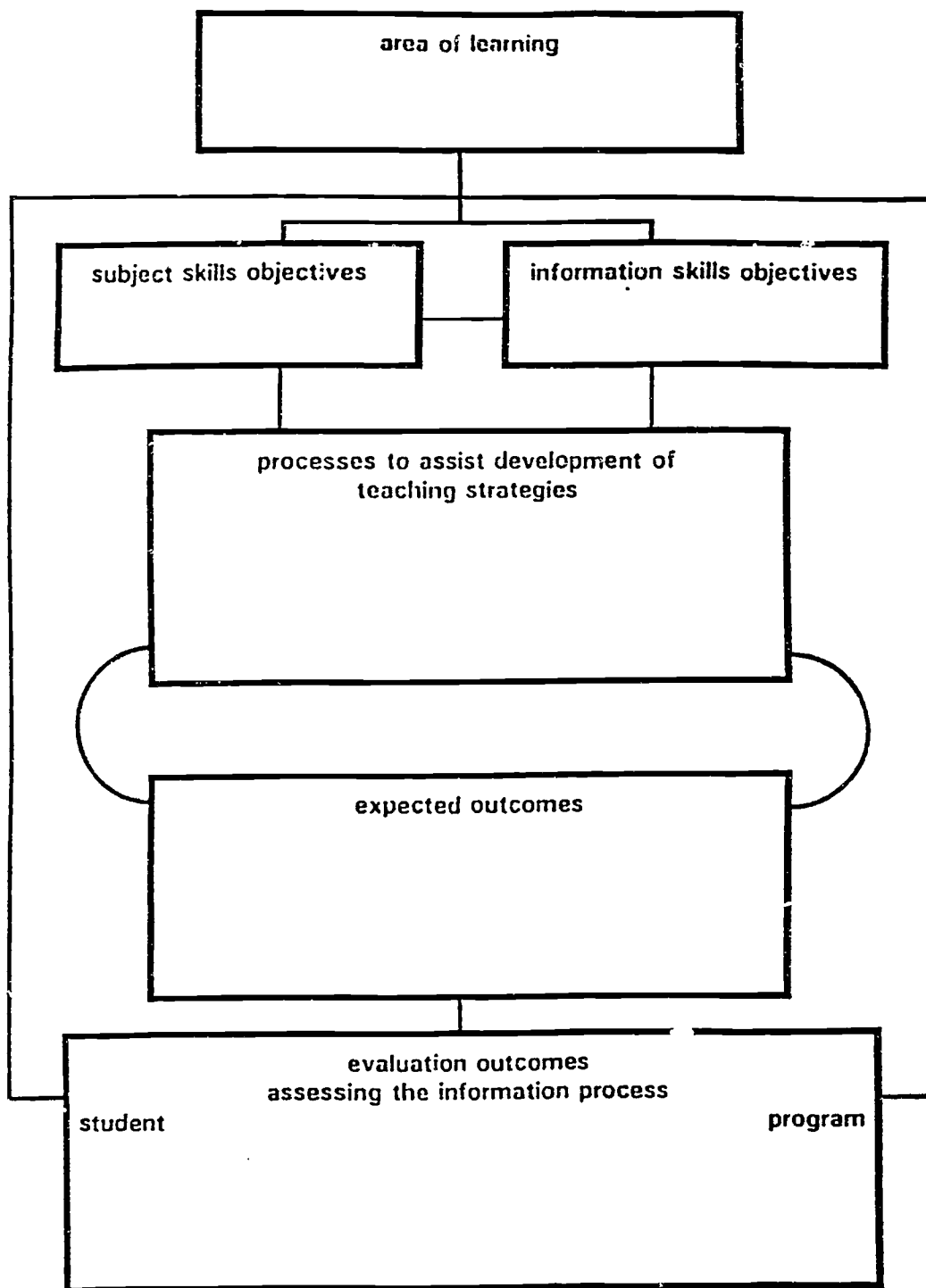
### CLIENT ACTIVITIES



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## APPENDIX C

### PLANNING MODEL



Model developed by C. McNicholas & R. Todd as an integrative mechanism for information skills.

# The Concept of the Virtual School Library

by

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## Virtual Reality and the Virtual Library

Earlier this year, I started to think about the concept of the virtual library. What does it mean? The term *virtual reality* is very much in the news. Exciting computer games, with the participant's hand encased in a sensitive glove and headgear which allows the eyes to focus on tiny TV screens, make possible total immersion in a computer-generated world. There are more serious applications, in the training of brain surgeons or pilots, in the exploration of a nuclear reactor core or the surface of Mars. Such scenarios have appeared on popular television programs, such as *Beyond 2000* in Australia and *Tomorrow's World* in the U.K. What is the link between this and the virtual library?

"The virtual library is one where the user has the illusion of access to a much larger collection of information than is really present, immediately or simultaneously. In the ultimate virtual library, he has access to universal knowledge, without delay at his desk." (Harley, 1980). The date of this quotation comes as a surprise. The words are those of A. J. Harley of the British Library's Lending Division, an organization whose *raison d'être* is to deliver a quick and cost-effective interlibrary loan service. This is the earliest incidence of the term *virtual library* on the LISA (*Library and Information Science Abstracts*) CD-ROM. More recently, it has been used by Lonsdale and Wheatley in their revealing survey of audio-visual and computer software materials in children's libraries in Britain, "In the emerging concept of virtual collection (an expression of the library's capacity to deliver more than just its locally stored and owned resources), there is another opportunity to establish the library as a service relevant to young adults' needs." The authors concluded that most public libraries were not seizing this opportunity, and that this lack of response was effectively postponing the information age for many children, (Lonsdale and Wheatley, 1991).

Some school libraries, on the other hand, are at the leading edge of applying new technologies to the learning situation. It is the

intention of this paper to describe some notable examples of the virtual school library at work. First, though, it may be helpful to take a retrospective glance at the traditional school library, so that the new model can stand out in sharper relief. An early rationale was for the school library to support the curriculum, enriching the experience gained in the classroom by allowing the more talented pupils to delve deeper into a subject which interested them. In Loertscher's taxonomy for the development of the school library media center, this would equate with the self-help warehouse stage. (Loertscher, 1988) At the other end of the scale was what he termed "Curriculum Development: along with other educators, the library media specialist contributes to the planning and structure of what will actually be taught." In the preceding stages are elements of CPPT (Co-operative Program Planning and Teaching), popularized by the Haycocks in Canada in the journal *Emergency Librarian* and on their lecture tour of Australia. However, this model still largely depended on the librarian's ability either to predict what resources would be needed to support a particular unit of study, or to influence what units would be taught after giving advice to teaching colleagues on materials that were immediately available or able to be purchased rapidly.

Is it possible to argue that none of these models or rationales are totally appropriate to the 1990s. Advanced communications technologies make possible a library without walls, where the librarian's professional skills are deployed to provide an *information service*. The school library is the first link into a whole network of libraries and other information agencies. The best, and the most cost-effective, information source may not be the two-year old reference book which cannot be replaced through lack of funds but a one-minute search of an online database. Once this is recognized, an entire set of rules about collection management comes tumbling down. "The twenty-first century collection will...be an accumulation of information-bearing objects--printed, aural,

graphic, digital--housed within the physical library, and also indices, abstracts, and catalogs through which, using electronic channels, the library user has access to pre-identified resources held by other libraries and information providers. The twenty-first century *collection* thus combines the *actual* and the *virtual* collection. The *virtual collection* is an electronically browsable collection." (Ghikas, 1989) Mary Ghikas was writing here about public libraries. School librarians owe it to their teaching colleagues and to their pupils to demonstrate the realities of information as a commodity in the modern world. From a pedagogical as well as an economic standpoint, learning can be better facilitated by embracing these new principles.

Another management issue in putting the new concept into practice is how much staff time must be re-deployed towards learning about, and teaching others about, access to outside information from other libraries and online databases. Little data is available to us at present, but a recent survey in the USA is interesting. The members of the Standards Writing Committee of *Information Power* were asked to draw up fourteen categories of work activity in a school library media center, and also to estimate how much time was spent by personnel on each category. Under the heading "providing access outside the library media center," the estimate by the panel of experts was 10% of time, but the reality was only 3.11%. (Everhart, 1992) The overseas perception is that online searching and allied activities have taken a greater hold in schools in American than in Britain and Australia, for example. It is likely, therefore, that the percentage in these countries would be even lower

### Campus 2000

There are two online information services specifically geared to the needs of schools, namely Campus 2000 and in Britain and NEXUS in Australia, which have opened a new world of information access and brought real meaning to the old cliché, "information at your fingertips." Formerly known as TTNS (The Times Network for Schools), Campus 2000 offers a variety of *own-brand databases*, such as FELINE for modern language teaching, and provides gateways into other databases such as NERIS (National Educational Resources Information Service) which is concerned with curriculum resources, and PROFILE, the huge

news database, owned by the *Financial Times*. Every LEA (Local Education Authority) has its own IT advisor who acts as the systems manager for Campus 2000 in that particular area and is on call to give advice and training in use. New subscribers are given an incentive to log on each day when the systems administrator sends them messages and in some areas organizes an e-mail competition or treasure hunt. In Cambridgeshire, a mailbox number was set up for the archeological excavation at Flag Fen, near Peterborough, so that local schools could contact the archeologist to obtain up-to-date progress reports and plan possible visits to the site.

Campus 2000 touches on all areas of the curriculum. A National Environment Database is being built up whereby pupils can carry out a survey of water life in all the local pools, rivers, and streams and send in the findings to the central data-gathering body. This is reminiscent of the way in which data was collected for the Domesday Interactive Video Project some years ago. (Blizzard, 1989) Information providers have a vested interest in becoming information users. Sixth form modern language students (the equivalent of Years 11 and 12) find the news digest service from French and German newspapers particularly useful, now that their final A Level examination is no longer based on literature but includes an option on the events of the previous year in that particular country. Social science and English students do not, unfortunately, have access to a similar service based on English newspapers. They can access PROFILE, but even with the special campus price reduction of 60p per minute connect time, as opposed to the usual commercial £1 per minute, this is still an expensive proposition. PROFILE gives access to the full text of a wide range of newspapers and magazines and is the database used by professional journalists. Pupils could, for example, study news reporting of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and compare the treatment of the news stories in different newspapers. Several other examples of the ways in which schools use Campus 2000 are described by Wheeler. (Wheeler, 1991)

### NEXUS

NEXUS began as an electronic bulletin board for schools in South Australia, operating from the Education Department's Angle Park Computing Center. From the beginning, NEXUS was a service designed for students and

teachers, which is what distinguishes it from many systems created by taking existing public services and adapting front ends to cater for school users. "It acted as a catalyst in prompting many schools to purchase a modem and so begin gaining familiarity with telecommunications." (Leonard, 1990) The management processes are very simple with one teacher in a school acting as the Accounts Manager and able to assign user IDs to pupils. Parameters can be set; for example, a pupil can only log on on Thursday afternoon, or can only search a designated database or alternatively can have unlimited access until a \$10 credit limit has been reached. Perhaps the greatest bonus is that the system is extremely simple to use from the logging on procedure to the screen design which is uniform across all databases, bulletin boards, and e-mail messages. All the barriers traditionally associated with searching commercial online databases have been removed. NEXUS is clearly for the end-user not for the information professional.

NEXUS is now available across Australia and its range of databases has been extended. (Leonard, 1991) One popular file is AAP (Australian Associated Press), a professional news wire service used by journalists in the print and broadcast media. It is constantly updated and the *raw news* stories are kept on NEXUS for several months. Pupils can read these and go on to examine the way in which different newspapers handle the stories. Like the other NEXUS databases, it can be searched by keywords, using Boolean operators, thus introducing students to the real world of electronic information retrieval at an affordable price. Another useful database is the file provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, taken from the 1986 census. There are 47 tables giving data on topics such as birthplace of immigrants, home ownership, marital status, etc., and these can be viewed by a particular local area, either by postcode or the SLA (Statistical Local Area). It is possible, for example, to discover which areas of Perth has more males than females, or which area has the most Italian immigrants. Any of the data can be downloaded into a spreadsheet, allowing for closer examination, analysis, and graphing. NEXUS also offers the SAGE (Science and Geography Education) database, an index to journals likely to be used by secondary school and TAFE (Technical and Further Education) students in the fields of geography and science. These include both Australian and international

journals. Another bibliographic database is the index to the "Computers and High Technology Supplement" which appears on Tuesdays in *The Australian* newspaper, and also the full text database of the *Macquarie Dictionary*. Some of these databases, such as the AAP and SAGE, are chargeable. Others, including the census and Macquarie, are free. They illustrate the wide range of information available to school libraries in Australia which can greatly extend in-house resources at a very low cost. A more detailed study of services used by Australian school has been made recently by Clyde (Clyde, 1992) and an article documenting the history of ASCIS (Australian Schools Cataloguing Information Service) is currently going to press. (Butterworth, 1992a)

### Wider Horizons: the Online Information Services in Schools Project

Schools need to decide whether to stop at these school-oriented services or to extend their activities to the searching of large commercial online databases. This was the rationale behind a major British research project which ran for two years from 1987 to 1989 under the direction of Ann Irving. Based in six schools, ranging from a primary school to a sixth form college, the project investigated whether online searching was both feasible in the normal classroom situation, and also whether it was educationally worthwhile. (Irving, 1990) The online hosts included DIALOG, PROFILE, BLAISE, DATA-STAR, and OCLC. The potential value of these services were linked to the nature of the modern school curriculum in terms of:

- the development of information handling skills;
- the use of a wide range of information sources;
- the need for very topical information; and
- understanding of how new information technologies are being applied.

School library collections lack the scope and currency to meet some of the new curricular needs, especially when pupils may themselves select a particular research topic as part of their GCSE coursework (the examination taken at 16+) or as part of their A Level studies (the examination taken at 18+). These choices are impossible to predict, and range from such diverse topics as the acoustics of wine glasses (quoted by Irving) and the influence of Lorenzo de Medici in Florence (the subject being

researched by the author's own daughter at the present moment). Such individual research, where the pupils themselves choose the topic, is designed to increase motivation. With access to online systems, the librarian is in a position to make an immediate tactical response to any sudden information need; older pupils can themselves learn to do a literature search, perhaps modifying their topic as they go along. A further rationale made by Irving involved the concept of an *electronic field trip*. This was, and indeed still is, a period when school-industry links are being encouraged and seen as beneficial to both sides. A *field trip* through the files of commercial database suppliers is the equivalent of a physical visit to an assembly line or shop floor, and just as important a preparation for the real world of the 21st century.

The implications for school librarians is that they will find themselves more in the role of *matchmaker*--matching students with the most suitable file for their needs--rather than acting as a direct intermediary between student and information. This was the conclusion reached by Carolyn Carter, the project officer for the Wider Horizons Project. She quotes the British Cabinet Office IT Advisory Panel:

The education system will, we believe, have a profound part to play in equipping the UK population with the skills--and perhaps more importantly the attitudes--necessary to bring success in the information business. Schools will need to provide tuition in the use of computer-based information systems... Above all, they should inculcate the concept that information has value." (Carter, 1989)

### St. Hilda's School: An Australian Case Study

The expertise of the school librarian as a gatekeeper into the wider information world should be at the disposal of teaching colleagues as well as pupils. The professional development needs of staff is an important aspect of the total information service provided. Discussing the total model for quality teaching, and the place technology and telecommunications have to play in this, Roy Lundin writes, "The reflective professional is or should be on a continual growth path, and is, therefore, continually analyzing and improving practice. The Extension of this process is innovation." (Lundin, 1992) Curriculum development has to happen much more quickly these days, so that

the education system can keep up to date with technological and social change. Using databases such as ERIC, teachers can check on how colleagues across the world are implementing new

programs. Sandra Naude, Senior Librarian at St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls in Perth, has been putting these ideas into practice for several years. A former health services librarian with wide experience with online searching, she has encouraged her principal to provide such a service for colleagues. (Naude, 1990) Online services in use at St. Hilda's School include ORBIT, AUSTRALIS, ASCIS, DISCOVERY, and more recently BRS. This list of topics indicates the range of literature searches performed:

Staff Appraisal	Metacognition
Teacher Evaluation	Lobbying
Test Design	Grants
Hypercard	Decertification
Walberg, Herbert J	Southeast Asia
Girls and Science	Australian Children's
Adler, Mortimer J	Authors
Playgrounds	Greenhouse Effect
School Schedules	Language Research.
Pastoral Care	

A typical example of the service was included in a video made by Edith Cowan University's Media Services Department. This segment shows the head of mathematics at St. Hilda's investigating research into the particular problems of teaching number patterns and calculus to girls. (Butterworth, 1992b)

### Document Delivery

Searching large bibliographic databases, either online or on CD-ROM, presents the user with a list of references to journal articles which may or may not be easily supplied. This is a problem which is currently straining the resources of many tertiary libraries, as more and more of their users discover the potential of CD-ROM in aiding their research. Most school libraries have no experience of using the ILL (Interlibrary Loan) system and would need to make a major re-adjustment to their budget in order to do so. The Wider Horizons Project described above negotiated with the British Library Document Supply Center at Boston Spa, so that each school was given a supply of free forms which normally cost three pounds each. They were thus able to bypass the normal, rather slow, ILL route through the public library system. The rapid response time

from the BLDSC, four days in some cases, was an excellent demonstration of efficiency of this organization. Some schools used the project as a catalyst to forge closer links with tertiary institutions and other large libraries in their area, so that more resources were accessible to them. This experiment provides lessons to all schools wishing to move nearer to the ideal of the virtual library: 1) that it is necessary to tackle the problem of document supply, 2) that the turn around time is critical; and 3) that some form of networking in the local area is a self-help solution that must be investigated.

### **Pupils as Information Providers**

Some of the most innovative and exciting work using communications technology to facilitate learning has been done when pupils themselves *gather and analyze data*, thus contributing to the sum total of information stored in the central database. These young information providers quickly turn into confident information users. A major British project covering 65 schools including some in Northern Ireland, Germany, America, and Australia used e-mail to demonstrate a creative, collaborative learning model. (Keep, 1991) Under the aegis of NCET (National Council for Educational Technology), the project had eleven regional and two national co-ordinators. Isolated pockets of activity were thus drawn together, given focus, and recorded in a systematic way, warts and all, for other teachers to learn from, emulate or reject, but on the basis of something more than the purely anecdotal evidence that had gone on before. Ros Keep writes, "There are three major contributions electronic communication can make in the development of information skills in students: It is a useful resource for gathering information; it is a useful resource for gathering information; it provides a context for purposeful research activity; and it provides an audience for children's findings." Those who have previously regarded e-mail in schools as a means of exchanging only personal information, the kind that pen-pals might write to one another, may be surprised at this very sophisticated and structured form of information gathering. In the River Pollution Project, for example, pupils had to construct a database in which to store all the data as it came in from other schools. The cleanliness of the water was determined by the different creatures found there over a period of time and at many points within the river system.

One particularly successful tool was that of the electronic questionnaire. Researchers in the corporate world have also discovered that people respond more honestly to questionnaires in the electronic format and are more willing to admit to anti-social behavior or petty crimes, for example, because of the perceived anonymity of the computer. (Sproull and Kiesler, 1991) In the NCET Dental Health Project, pupils devised their own questionnaire from which it was discovered that more than 6% of children cleaned their teeth less than once a day much to the righteous indignation of the young investigators. International communication opened up exciting possibilities. A German student in the final year of school requested information from a Northern Ireland primary school about the conflict going on in the province. Questions such as: "Do you see any peaceful solutions?" and "Have you personally been involved in the conflict?" resulted in teachers and pupils having to sit down and think carefully about their situation, perhaps for the first time. English children in contact with an Australian school gained insight into really hot weather when they found out that the Australians could not go to school on one occasion because the tar had melted on the roads. Younger children discussed what was meant by "down under" and why Australians do not drop off the planet if they are underneath it! Some of the children were only five years old. The amount of *off-line* activity which the projects generated was impressive. In the electronic writer-in-residence project, participants were sent off to travel the world on behalf of an old and infirm archeologist. In order to respond, they had to research thoroughly the various locations, testing the resources of their library to the limit. This idea of not confining a writer-in-residence to one institution but widening the sphere of activity through e-mail has also been tried most successfully in Australia. Roald Dahl's visit in 1988, and the activity before and after, in formulating questions to the great man and in disseminating the answers, is shown in the New South Wales video, *Communicating Kids*.

### **Education for Mutual Understanding: A Northern Ireland Case Study**

In the province of Northern Ireland, electronic mail is being used to help Protestant and Roman Catholic schools break down barriers which exist between them. This is a region where almost all children attend

denominational schools; where the teachers have attended separate training colleges and where religious differences are hardened by the violence going on around them. E-mail is seen as a new medium to foster mutual understanding in a scenario where bombs and killings make physical interaction between schools impossible. (Cunningham, 1992) Seventeen schools took part in a project entitled *Food and Farming in Northern Ireland* in the first year, and then subsequently were free to choose their own topic. The Fermanagh group of schools chose *The Irish Famine, 1845-50* in the following year, a potentially explosive subject, since the suffering still lives in the collective Roman Catholic memory and the resentment against British rule feeds on it to this day. Clearly, traditional attitudes need to be confronted and talked out before a solution is possible. Photocopies of the admission register of a local workhouse, to which the starving flocked during the famine, was obtained from the Public Record Office in Belfast, and each school was given the task of analyzing it. The generalizations found in history books were discovered to be not entirely correct. For example, the workhouse was not filled with Roman Catholics; contrary to popular opinion, Protestants were also suffering. Daily admission figures were circulated on the e-mail system, and these progressed from twenty or thirty to a peak of 600 individuals clamoring for admission. History was brought to life for all the pupils involved. In another exercise, an emigrant questionnaire was compiled and sent to 150 schools in major British cities, such as Liverpool, Glasgow, and London, seeking replies from descendants of Irish emigrants. Abbeydale School in Sheffield sent printed copies of the 1861 census showing that the majority of those giving their birthplace as Ireland came from the most stricken areas of western Ireland. An interesting analogy emerged. The present day population of Abbeydale is largely of immigrant Pakistani descent, so children in Ireland were able to learn at first hand from children of their own age what it means to come from a remote rural background to an urban industrial environment, just as their own ancestors had done.

### **The Virtual School Library and the Role of the Librarian**

It is difficult to think of a more valid and meaningful learning experience using telecommunications than this E.M.U. project in

Northern Ireland. It is an inspiration for librarians everywhere to set up a situation where teachers and pupils in their school can experience this kind of work. The use of new technologies can be motivational to both teachers and pupils, and can greatly enhance the teaching of library and information skills. Traditional relationships between pupils and teachers are being eroded by technology. Pupils can not only become autonomous learners, but they can become experts on a topic, either individually or collaboratively. At the same time, teachers need to become students in order to keep up to date with the new technological developments. The school librarian's role is to provide the supportive environment which allows both of these things to happen. As Beverley Anderson commented recently, "We could just as easily produce a generation of highly sophisticated browsers, electronic couch potatoes whipping at high speed through information and ideas assembled by other people." (Anderson, 1992) The important thing is to produce active, creative learners in a library that is a learning workshop, where both the physical and the virtual collection is appropriate to the 1990s. This paper in documenting examples of good practice has attempted to provide inspiration and practical advice on how to proceed.

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# Lobbying for Effective Resource Based Learning An Australian Experience

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Australia, like many other countries, has embraced a resource-based learning approach in education. In our country, education is a state responsibility, and over the past five years, several of the states have adopted educational policies and programs which place emphasis on this approach. In this paper I will refer to the lobbying experiences of teacher librarians in Victoria. However, many of you will have an opportunity to learn of another state's experiences, South Australia, when you join us for the International Association of School Librarianships' Conference in 1993.

Resource-based learning Australian style, can be defined as educational programs which actively involve students in the use of a wide range of appropriate print, non-print, and human resources with the aim of developing skills for independent and life-long learning. An additional aim is the enhancement of the relationship between knowledge, skills, process, and values which enable students to become life-long learners and contributors to society.

You may well ask then, why would teacher librarians wish to respond to and be involved in the policy developments for resource-based learning? The answer is one that will not surprise you. Of all educators, teacher librarians are aware of all the factors that are essential to ensure that such an approach is effective, and believe that to enable conditions to exist that will result in success, requires understanding and co-operation from a number of players--education authorities, school administration, teachers, students, other libraries and information agencies, and of course teacher librarians themselves.

A brief outline of Victorian educational policies will set the experience of teacher librarians in context. During the 1980s, the Victorian government implemented a number of new policies. Education was to be viewed as a continuum from Preparatory grade to Year 12, rather than separate approaches to primary and post-primary education, and was to concentrate on developing the child as an independent learner. One strategy was

resource-based learning through which a student would use a range of resources, catering to independent learning styles and pace, and enabling each student to acquire skills in the use of resources that would equip him or her to learn throughout life. This policy was integrated into the new Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) for Years 11 and 12 students. All VCE subjects include requirements which involve working with information obtained from a range of sources through questions, research, and personal and group investigation.

The Certificate was tested in a number of schools in selected subjects, initially at Year 11, a year later at Year 12, and finally fully introduced in all subjects this year. Despite the long term planning, pilot programs, research projects, and staged introduction, considerable difficulties have been experienced by all parties concerned.

Teacher librarians have been heavily involved with all these parties and at all levels of the problems. To some extent, they initially felt a degree of triumph that an educational philosophy close to their hearts had been so eagerly adopted by the authorities. At the same time, individual teacher librarians and professional associations (The School Library Association of Victoria, and the Schools Section of the Australian Library and Information Association) strongly presented their concerns to authorities on the difficulties likely to be experienced--insufficient and inappropriate resources in schools, lack of expertise by teachers in integrating resources into their teaching, and the limited information and research skills of students.

Concurrently, teacher librarians through the professional associations and the Statewide School Library Support Center held many workshops and seminars to ensure all teacher librarians were aware of the requirements of the new Certificate and particularly to further develop skills in co-operative planning and teaching and in teaching information and research skills.

However, it is the lobbying experience of teacher librarians I wish to share with you. We soon learn that each of the stake holders had specific objectives and for the program to be successful, each group had to be lobbied differently and specifically as part of an overall co-ordinated plan.

Lobbying in this context is defined as an act or process designed to influence others or bring about a specific decision favored by those doing the lobbying, in this case teacher librarians. In each case, I will outline the basic issues and problems experienced by the group, the strategies used by teacher librarians, and the result.

#### **Target            Educational Authorities**

##### **The Issue**

The Government wished the Victorian Certificate of Education to succeed.

##### **The Problem**

There was considerable antagonism expressed publicly by schools, teachers, students, and parents to the Certificate, and particularly to difficulties related to resources. The Ministry for Education had to be seen to be addressing these problems.

##### **Strategies**

Although teacher librarians predicted many of these difficulties, their advice had been either unheard or unheeded. However, as the program was progressively implemented, groups holding influence became clearer, and it was increasingly easy to identify the target group to lobby. Teacher librarians requested inclusion in in-service programs held by the implementing body, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VACB). Other interest groups picked up the concerns expressed by teacher librarians, e.g. subject associations in relation to availability of appropriate materials. Of great value also was the support provided by other librarians, especially the State Library of Victoria which had been overwhelmed by student demand.

##### **The Result**

A full time teacher librarian has been appointed to VACB and is able to contribute to subject outlines and training programs and respond to inquiries.

All subject requirements are to be reviewed six months prior to implementation and

checked to ensure references quoted are in print and available and that topics are able to be resourced.

Publications addressing resource issues have been distributed widely to schools and libraries throughout the state.

The Government has allocated an additional \$4 million to be distributed to post primary school libraries to increase their resources.

One disappointing result however, has been the decrease in staff numbers to two in the main support body for teacher librarians, the Statewide School Library Support Center which has greatly diminished professional support for schools.

#### **Target            School Administration**

##### **The Issue**

The need to implement the new Certificate as efficiently and effectively as possible.

##### **The Problems**

Demands on administration by teachers experiencing exceptionally heavy teaching and marking loads, teacher librarians concerned with limited funds and resources; students and parents complaining about inadequate conditions; increased student retention rates placing greater strain on existing resources; and overall limited funding.

##### **Strategies**

The lobbying process in each school is dependent on the opportunities and constraints of the school situation and the strengths and weaknesses of the individual teacher librarian. Teacher librarians have used a range of strategies which have had to be situation-specific to be effective.

One common problem experienced by most schools was that of physical access to resources and this has raised the basic issue of school organization--the area of scheduling. Where schools have worked on block timetables, libraries have been inundated with 200+ students all wanting resources on much the same topic at the same time, or all teachers of a particular subject wanting to use the same video at the same time. Schedules have therefore been examined from the point of view of access to resources.

Lobbying to ensure involvement in planning of teaching programs has been another

effective means of influencing the type of research to be undertaken, and to ensure resources are available and provided in an appropriate manner for individual or group work. Teacher librarians have outlined the advantages to the school of a co-operative planning and teaching approach and, in many cases, have been very involved in the curriculum planning process. In this way they have had an opportunity to demonstrate their expertise in resources and in integration of resources in the teaching and learning process.

A further strategy has been to present the advantages of a total school policy on the teaching of information skills. Increasingly there is recognition of the need for a deliberate, planned approach to students' acquisition of information and research skills through all years of the school.

### **The Result**

Increased effectiveness in access and use of resources and fewer problems at the school level.

Many teaching librarians have taken the opportunity of the VCE to present the advantages of total school approaches to the teaching of information skills.

Greater recognition of the expertise of teacher librarians and their role in the total educational program of the school.

Less stress on teachers and students through research requirements and therefore administrators more confident of success.

### **Target Teachers**

#### **The Issue**

For many teachers, the new Certificate and required resource-based teaching methods are threatening the basis of their professionalism. They have been forced to change their known and established teaching methods and feel ill prepared, both in integrating resources and research in their teaching and in assisting and assessing students.

#### **The Problem**

For many teachers it has been a matter of coping, and this has in some cases resulted in failure. Lack of understanding of the educational characteristics of resources has resulted in inappropriate use. Lack of knowledge of resources in the school library has resulted in distress by students and frustration by library staff. Lack of planning has meant inadequate

provision and/or access in the school with resultant pressure on students to find materials elsewhere. Teachers working on their own have developed kits of resources, e.g. class sets of photocopies which have taken them a large amount of time to prepare.

In other schools there has been close co-ordination of subject programs with the whole year level studying the same aspects of the course at the same time and teachers sharing the preparation of resources. This approach has also put pressure on teachers who have had to expose their expertise, or lack of it, to their colleagues, are committed to working with materials others have gathered or prepared, and find access to resources, such as videos, difficult when all teachers wish to use the same video at the same time.

Further many teachers felt unprepared for the new Certificate both through their initial teacher training and their teaching experience, and even more inadequate in introducing a research unit. Many assumed that the students knew how to do research and had learned that elsewhere. The result has been research units that have been unclear in purpose, scope, and required result. This problem, in turn, placed further pressure on teachers as they then had to assess these units and face presentation of their own and their students efforts to colleagues when marks were standardized across the subject.

### **Strategies**

Lobbying has taken place on several levels through bodies such as VCAB and SLAV, whole school programs, subject faculties, and individually.

Teacher librarians in school settings have used many strategies. Some have worked through faculties, and influenced a co-ordinated approach. Others have worked through particular teachers as role models, and expanded their influence through success stories. Some have in-serviced teachers in resource use, even to simple strategies of ensuring they are aware of what resources there are in the school library. Others have concentrated on provision and developed bibliographies of school held material on particular topics, or extended reserve or deposit collections.

The most common strategies have been to press for inclusion in curriculum meetings to try to influence the resource-based learning approach at the planning stage. Many teacher librarians have extended this to more formally

developed co-operative planning and teaching programs.

However, the greatest area of influence has been that of information and research skills. There has been widespread recognition by teachers that these skills need to be taught, that teachers need to know what skills are taught and when they are taught, and that students must have certain skills before they can adequately undertake research. Teacher librarians have offered expertise, co-operative teaching, awareness of skill teaching throughout the school, and in many cases are co-ordinating skills programs.

### **The Result**

Teachers stress levels are decreasing as they become more familiar with requirements and are aware of the skills the teacher librarians can offer.

Use of resources is planned and organized and teacher efficiency is improved.

Teachers are accepting teacher librarians' input as they see its relevance to their work and the benefits of using their expertise.

### **Target Students**

#### **The Issue**

For many students the issue related to resource-based requirements was the need to succeed and to achieve the highest possible mark for their work, as school-based assessment forms a significant part of the final score on which university entrance is based. For many other students, particularly those with language problems, the issue was to survive--to actually complete the requirements.

#### **The Problems**

Large numbers of students have been very unclear as to the purpose of units based on the use of resources and so have placed significantly more time and effort on these units than was required. A further aspect has been their lack of understanding of what is involved in research, and difficulties have been experienced at all stages of the research process--identifying the issue or topic, defining the elements to be researched, locating appropriate resources, gathering information and recording it in an usable way, integrating the information, developing the research findings, and finally presenting the results.

Many students who lacked literacy skills, have faced considerable problems in

attempting these units, and not only in one subject but in all. However, nearly all students have experienced a range of difficulties through a lack of information skills. These involve viewing and listening skills and interviewing skills as well as what is generally accepted as information skills. Another area relating to skills that has been identified as a problem has been the recognition that many students have limited understanding of the characteristics of various resource formats and use the information they extract in an inappropriate manner, such as an article providing an opinion presented as fact.

As indicated earlier, for many students access to resources has been difficult in the school setting, and many have ventured to other libraries. These efforts have also been frustrating as they are still often unable to locate resources with information at an appropriate level and have spent some hours of their valuable time in this search.

### **Strategies**

Teacher librarians have lobbied on three fronts with students. The first has been the work outlined earlier with teachers. The second, working directly with students, and the third with parents.

Working with individual students and class groups, the teacher librarian can identify the problems the students are facing and indicate to them the need for clarification. While this may also indirectly be lobbying teachers for co-operative planning, it also indicates to students that there are strategies that can be used to help them.

Many students have benefitted from information skills instruction from teacher librarians. Often the individual student will tell classmates to "ask the teacher librarian" or request time in the library for instruction in use of specific resources, e.g. CD Roms. This strategy of working through opinion leaders has proved very successful on many occasions.

The third main contact area relating to students has been parents. Many parents have felt uninformed about the resource-based requirements and have publicly expressed their concerns, particularly when they have attempted to help their child and personally experienced the difficulties of not only locating resources but gaining the right information. While most schools and the authorities have held information sessions on the VCE for parents, other sessions have been held by

teacher-librarian groups outlining issues related to resource-based learning, and providing parents with strategies they can use to help their child. Parents have expressed appreciation of these sessions, indicating greater confidence in the purpose of the research units, and increased awareness of the demands locating information placed on the student, both in time and the possible need to search in several places.

### **The Result**

Student use of school libraries has improved. They are more organized in their approach to research, more confident in the process, and more efficient in their choice of resources. In turn this has assisted teacher librarians to work more effectively with individuals and groups.

### **Target Other Libraries and Information Agencies**

#### **The Issue**

A large increase in the use of these libraries by secondary school students.

#### **The Problems**

Academic, public, and special libraries had experienced little use by secondary school students, so this change posed considerable problems for them. First, the sheer numbers placed increased demand on reference staff and services. Many students had only vague ideas of what they wanted so reference staff spent more time than usual interviewing and assisting this particular user group and felt this disadvantaged their regular clients. The numbers also put pressure on space, particularly in public and special libraries. Many students had very little idea of these libraries' collections and were very frustrated to find that the information they required was not necessarily available in just the form they wanted, but was, of course, suitable for the primary user groups.

The State Library of Victoria was severely affected by student use, to the extent that on some weekends the queue to enter the Library extended well beyond the entrance throughout the day. Staff felt overwhelmed by numbers and by the inadequacy of their response, both in terms of the time they could devote to the inquiry but also in providing effective advice.

### **The Strategies**

Teacher librarians were particularly aware of these problems at the local level and many networks were set in place, not only to establish co-operation between schools to assist in deepening the collections, but also to increase awareness of the resource problems. One strategy employed by many local areas was the establishment of a committee of teacher librarians in a particular district with membership by a designated VCE Librarian from the local public library. In this way information of use patterns and problems were shared, and specific strategies developed. These included introduction to the resources held by public libraries to VCE students by the public librarian in the school or by the teacher librarian and networking of some schools and public libraries for use of CD Rom databases located at the public library.

In addition the Ministry for the Arts has allocated funds to co-operative projects to assist the development and maintenance of this interaction, not only between public and school libraries, but between all types of libraries at a local level.

The State Library of Victoria demonstrated considerable leadership with its establishment of an Education Center with the aim of researching the problems and developing strategies to assist educational authorities, schools, and teacher librarians.

The Ministry of Education supported this project with the short-term appointment of five teacher librarians to the Ministry of the Arts (responsible for the State Library and public libraries) to assist in implementation of a range of processes. Two of these appointees were assigned to the State Library and three assigned to cover extensive country regions.

The Australian Council of Library and Information Services (ACLIS) sponsored research into the use of libraries by VCE students. This report is currently in publication. The results will greatly assist future planning.

### **The Result**

Libraries and information agencies have become more reconciled to secondary student use, and as the above support systems have come into operation, are much more confident in responding to their demands.

Teacher librarians have developed extensive networks between a range of libraries and acted as the liaison between the school and

other authorities. They have also demonstrated their educational and librarianship expertise to the wider librarianship profession.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher librarians have learned a great deal from this experience. A major lesson has been that unco-ordinated advice and submissions to Government have little impact. It has only been when all interested parties--teacher librarians, teachers, the public, and other librarians have protested that action has taken place. So next time, we will lobby related groups as well as presenting our own views.

Another significant aspect has been the power of the media. With a state government facing an election in the near future, and their educational policy under prolonged emotional attack and extensively reported in the media, the response has been quick, public, and deliberately targeted at the major problem areas--the lack of resources and the need for expert advice in the integration and use of resources in the new certificate.

Teacher librarians have also gathered strength from each other, and the support of colleagues and professional associations has enabled them to develop confidence and tactics in response to their own specific situations.

The new Victorian Certificate of Education has provided an opportunity for teacher librarians to demonstrate their expertise as educators, managers and librarians. This position has been acknowledged by the substantial number of promotion positions that have been recently advertised in the area of curriculum resources.

While substantial progress has been made, the lobbying process is never complete. There are still considerable problems to be resolved in all areas. However, teacher librarians have a clearer indication of the objectives of each target group and the difficulties they are experiencing, and are perfecting their strategies as lobbyists to achieve effective resource-based learning.

# Getting To Know You: Fiction as a Tool to Create a World of Mutual Understanding and Respect

by  
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The world has never before witnessed a migration as large as today, not even during the Germanic Invasions which is considered the largest migration era in history. Millions of people are forced to leave their homes because of war, persecution, famine, environmental disaster, or simply because they must find work. All migration is however not due to catastrophes, the European Common Market for example will allow, and even encourage, people to work in any country within the community. The number of refugees alone, according to United Nations statistics, exceeds 17 million people and there is, as far as I know, no world-wide statistic on the remaining migration.

Whatever the reasons for the migration may be, it often creates problems in the receiving areas, problems of economic and social character, and last but not least problems of coexistence. Ignorance often engenders hostility and ignorance is a great threat against those who are different, e.g. immigrants and street-children, since people in the receiving areas know very little about those who arrive. The school, and consequently the school library, has a big responsibility for neutralizing this hostility. If we take a look at Sweden we can see that the Swedish people's attitude towards foreigners has changed during the last few years, and we have seen several attacks on refugee camps, on shops, and on restaurants owned by immigrants. The schools have now intensified their work on the immigrant issue as a result of this change in attitude.

In this presentation, I will concentrate on the role of the school library and in particular give examples of how fiction can be used to illustrate the problems. I do this mainly from a Swedish perspective with a basis in our curriculum, but I am convinced that the fundamental idea is applicable all over the world.

As an introduction, I will give a short presentation of Sweden and its modern immigration history. Sweden is a rich, sparsely populated country (21 persons per km<sup>2</sup>). The last war on Swedish ground took place in 1809

and Sweden declared neutrality during both the 1st and 2nd world wars. Being neutral not only meant that Sweden took no active part in the wars, but it also meant that we during the 2nd World War admitted refugees from occupied countries and people who were persecuted because of race or religious belief. The Swedish people's attitude was in general very well-inclined to those refugees. Most of them, except those from eastern Europe, returned to their country when the war was over.

Sweden was a developing country before the 1st World War but had a tremendous advantage after the wars since everything was intact, and the real rise of Swedish industry could begin. The first post-war immigrants were industrial workers from the whole of Europe. The late sixties, however, brought a new group of immigrants to Sweden, refugees from outside Europe, and in 1969 the Swedish Immigration Board was founded. The decline in world economy, wars, and persecution have now changed the whole picture, and the major part of the immigrants are persons seeking asylum. This change is also reflected in the Swedish people's attitude toward immigrants. The early post-war immigrants were coveted workers who helped to increase the gross national product whereas the refugees of today come from totally different cultures and involve a cost for the society while they are waiting for their residence permit. They have, up till now, not been allowed to work during that period and the average waiting time is still about two years even if the number of asylum seeking persons has decreased (the civil war in Yugoslavia has however resulted in an increasing number the last couple of months). That, together with the decline in the Swedish economy, has resulted in an increasing hostility, and even racism, towards foreigners which the Swedish schools work intensively on counteracting.

The present curriculum of the nine-year compulsory school states that "the school shall develop qualities that support and strengthen the democracy's principles on tolerance, cooperation and equal rights... This implies among

other things that the school shall raise the students' awareness that no human being should be exposed to oppression, and that no one with problems and difficulties should be left on his own. Everyone has a responsibility to try to reduce other people's pain, suffering and humiliation... The school shall seek to found solidarity with neglected groups within and outside the country. It shall actively work for integration of the immigrants in our country's community... This means that the school shall aim at giving the students an ability to enter into and understand how other people live and will to act for their best, too."<sup>1</sup> (my translation)

This part of the curriculum provides the frame but the teachers and the students paint the picture, and you will never get the same picture twice. They study different religions, agriculture, economy, geography, history, folk-tales, manners and custom, food and clothing, the present political situation, and environmental problems. The list can be very long and the approach depends, among other things, on the age of the students. But the direction is also a question of the student's own neighborhood; it there are any immigrants and from which countries they come. And I will, just to illustrate this, give you examples of how two schools in Umeå have worked.

One senior level school worked intensively on the refugee issue for one week. Refugees from different countries were invited to classes to tell about why and how they fled, what it was like to come to Sweden, the difference in life, and so on. The students studied the situation for refugees in different parts of the world; they cooked foreign meals in their home economic lessons and studied Persian carpets in their handicraft lessons. In addition to this, some classes were visited by librarians who presented fiction about refugees. This week required a huge number of books, both fiction and non-fiction, and articles from magazines and newspapers. One of the key persons behind the week was the school librarian, assisted by the school library center where I work, which supplied teachers and students with the necessary material. Some of the books I present in this paper were introduced at book-talks.

At another school, the junior level studied some of the countries Umeå has immigrants from. They concentrated on the positive aspects and studied culture, clothing, houses, games, and languages, but they also studied the situation of the children in these

countries, and they read children's literature, both folk-tales and modern books.

The curriculum stated that the school shall give the students an "ability to enter into and understand how other people live" and this can, as I said, be done in many ways. But they all have one thing in common; they require a lot of written material--articles and books, fiction and non-fiction. With all due reference to facts, they often become too abstract; they do not *live*. Fiction on the other hand is about *real* people; it takes the problems to a question of human beings. This is one of the reasons why fiction, in my opinion, is superior to non-fiction.

It might be interesting, as a matter of curiosity, to give a historical introduction when young adults in Sweden discuss immigration. Sweden was, as I said earlier, a poor country and about 1 1/4 million Swedes emigrated only to the United States. What did the American people think about them? Did they like them or were they a nuisance to others? Erskine Caldwell, best known for his novel *Tobacco Road*, has written a short story, *Country Full of Swedes*, that turns many ideas upside down. The main character wakes up one morning by a terrible noise all around the house, and when he asks what is going on, he is told that the Swedes were coming and they should save what could be saved. He says, "I wasn't any more scared of the Swedes than I was of the Finns and Portuguese, anyway. It's a god-awful shame for Americans to let Swedes and Finns and the Portuguese scare the daylight out of them. God-helping, they are no different than us, and you never see a Finn or a Swede scared of an American. But people like Jim and Mrs. Frost are scared to death of Swedes and other people from the old countries."<sup>2</sup>

It is easy to believe that the refugee problem is a modern phenomenon and it is important to show that this is not the case. I once asked some classes if they could guess who is the most famous refugee in history, and I got many different suggestions, mostly from modern times, but almost no one thought about Jesus. The Danish author Cecil Bødker has written two novels about Jesus, *Marias Barn* (*The Child of Mary*) and in part 1, "Dregen" (*The Boy*) she describes Mary's paralyzing fatigue when they had arrived in Egypt, "she felt as empty as the house." They had brought almost nothing, knew no one at all, and Mary longed for her family and friends. But then everything changed when her new neighbors came to visit her and gave her small things they needed for

their everyday life. This is of course a completely natural reaction; the feeling is not conditioned by time or place and it is easy to take the description to your heart when you read it and apply it to the refugees' situation today.

A common starting point when to begin to talk about refugees is to ask why they have left their country. It is important to show that the majority do it not out of curiosity, or because they think they will make a fortune in the new country, but because they have to. The poor people end up in camps in other countries as poor as their own, and some who have enough money and know what country they want to go to, go there. Some of them buy their service from smugglers of human beings, but these smugglers do often lead their victims right into death. The German author Werner J. Egli tells in his book *Wenn ich Flügel hätte* (*If I Had Wings*) about a poor Mexican family who plans to go to the United States because they are no longer able to make their living in their home village. Their *helper* takes them to the desert, points out the direction, says, "There is America," and leaves them. The direction *was* correct, but the distance was too long for them, and the water they finally found was not drinkable; it was alkali lakes and those who drank the water died.

But there are of course others that help people cross borders, persons that do it out of belief, and they would never dream of cheating their *clients*. Mahmut Baksi, Kurdish writer from Turkey who lives in Sweden, has written a novel, *Helin* about a girl and her family who are persecuted, tortured, and raped because they are Kurdish. Friends help them cross the Syrian border and Helin tells, "We crept over the cut barb wire and began sliding ahead with the help of elbows over the mine field, as the smugglers had told us. You mustn't crawl on your knees they said, you had to lie down as flat as possible with your nose on the ground and carefully wriggle along... They had placed a child between every grown-up so that the adults could throw themselves over us and protect us with their bodies if something happened. All he men were armed."<sup>3</sup> (my translation)

Helin and her family went to Sweden; when an asylum-seeking person arrives in Sweden, he is questioned by the police and then is either let into the country or refused. The decision might be long, and some will be put in custody while waiting. It is not difficult to imagine what it feels like when your dream of

freedom turns into a nightmare of uncertainty, and you are put in prison without having committed a crime. Inger Brattström describes in her book *Selime - Utan Skyddsnät* (*Selime - Without Safety Net*) how a Pakistani family belonging to the Ahmadiya sect decide to go to Sweden. They had an uncle who lived in Sweden, and he told them to come, "This is a good country. Democracy and freedom, no persecution. The children can go to good schools. Free of charge. And you can be ill too, it costs nothing. If you don't have any money, you get it from the social welfare office. Come here. To Sweden."<sup>4</sup> (my translation) What happens when they get here? They are not recognized as religious refugees, and Selime's father is put in prison because there is a risk they might run away and hide themselves. He is being released when her mother loses the baby she is expecting, but he is no longer the man he used to be; he is broken. The family has to wait more than two years for the decision. The children go to school, make new friends, and the whole family is slowly adapting to their new life. When the decision finally is made, it is a refusal, and they are forced to leave the country. The book ends with their plane taking off.

These examples illustrate very well what kind of experiences refugees may have to go through before they reach their place of destination. I think that most people never have thought about it in this way, and it is important to show that it is not a question of just making a reservation on a train or a plane. I know that the books I have mentioned will not leave the readers untouched. It is of course a risk that they will get a feeling of, "It's no use if I get involved, I can't do anything to help," but this is wrong. Siv Widerberg tells in her book *En otrolig historia* (*An Incredible Story*) of a senior level school and what happened when one of the students and her family received an expulsion order to be sent back to Chile. The pupil's council first decided to demonstrate and then, when they realized that the demonstration did not lead to anything, went on a strike, occupied the school, and finally went on a hunger strike. Need I say that the decision of the Immigration Board was changed and the family could stay. This might perhaps sound like a fairy tale, but the truth is that the book is based on several cases where children and adults fought for families that have been threatened with expulsion.

It is very difficult for someone who has never been to another country, or has just been

a tourist, to imagine what it is like to come to a new country with a new language, perhaps even a new alphabet, new customs; yes, a completely new culture. One of the first Swedish authors of children's literature to write about immigrants was Gun Jacobson. In her book *Tack - håll käften* (*Thanks - Shut Up*) she tells about a Greek family coming to Sweden. The children are just begin-ning to learn some Swedish when a group of teenagers start making fun of their Swedish and tell them that they will teach them some new words. But they teach the wrong words, for example that you say **shut up** when you mean **thank you**. The whole family finds it difficult to adapt to their new life; nothing turns out to be the way they expected. Manolis, one of the boys hates school. "He hates Sweden. He cannot understand how he will endure three years in school and three years in Sweden. He wants to go home - home to Greece, at once - to a country where people talk properly and eat real food and dress reasonably. Not as in Sweden! This damned country!"<sup>5</sup> (my translation)

The question of adaptation is important. Quite a number of Swedes think that immigrants should become Swedes, i.e. put aside their original cultural identity, including their religious rules, but there is also often a conflict within the family. The children both want to live like their friends, to be a part of their new society, and still keep parts of their own culture, and the parents see how their whole pattern of life falls apart. Khalid Hussain, Pakistani immigrant in Norway, was 16 years old when he wrote his first novel *Pakkis* (Swedish title in translation: *Fucking Black-Head*) about a Pakistani boy called Sajjad. The book is not autobiographical but is based on both his and other immigrants experiences. One day Sajjad's father tells the rest of the family that he plans to send his daughter back to Pakistan because, "I don't want her to grow up in this society. It is not made for us, especially not for our girls. If she grows up here, she will forget her native country, her culture. It is somewhat different with girls than with boys. So much more they have to think about. If Nadia grows up here, there will be a great pressure about clothes among other things put on her. I do not, for example, want her to wear tight jeans or walk around with a chewing gum in her mouth."<sup>6</sup> (my translation from the Swedish edition) At another occasion he tells Sajjad, "Don't you start comparing yourself to other boys. It is not

my problem if they do not know how to pray, but it is my problem that you don't know how to pray. Think of your old country! You are not a Norwegian! You will never become like them even if you dress like them. You are Pakistani, get that into your head. That is why I want to send Nadia to Pakistan, because I do not want her to become like you."<sup>7</sup> (my translation from the Swedish edition)

Annelies Schwarz tells in her book *Hamide spielt Hamide* (*Hamide plays Hamide*) about a teacher in Germany who mounts a school play about families from different countries living in the same house. The students write the dialogue, and they play more or less themselves. The play becomes very important to them and especially to Hamide, a 14 year old Turkish girl, who lives a hard life at home. She has to do a lot of home work, take care of her brothers, and machine-knit sweaters for sale and her father keeps her from school and let her work instead. He does not at first approve of her acting but finally gives his permission and the first performance can take place. The real problems start after they have finished the play, when one of the boys in the group wants to take her out for an ice-cream. She is of course not allowed and in her desperation about the situation, she takes sleeping pills and is taken to the hospital. She survives, but her father sends her back to Turkey where he already has arranged for her marriage.

In Sweden, as well as in the United States, Great Britain, and many other countries, we take so many things for granted. We find it hard to accept that young people should not be allowed to see people they want to see, to go where they want to go, and to take part in different social activities. But a great part of the immigrants plan to return home some day and they want their children to be a part of that society, not the new one, and that would not be possible if they become Swedish, or English, or... At least the parents believe so, but their countries change too. It makes life very hard for the children since they do not know where they belong; they often have to balance on a knife-edge, to live a double life, and some of them do not make it. They feel as if they were only half, and some try to commit suicide or become criminals. They need all the help and understanding they can get from friends and adults to avoid that development.

The prior books dealt with people moving to another country, but the major part of those who move do it within their countries.

Most of the developing countries have huge problems with people moving from the countryside to the towns. We all know what problems this has created--ghettos, unemployment, begging, criminality, prostitution of different kinds, drugs, and diseases just to mention a few examples. It is easy to say that people should know better than to move to the cities, but what choice do many of them have. Wars or environmental disasters ruin their fields; they are in the hands of banks and loan-sharks or land-owners who do not need them any more or send them away because they demand human rights. So the cities are the only place they can go. There is of course also deep inside them a hope that the city will mean the start of something good, but the children are, as always, the great losers, millions of them end up as street-children some of which are runaways because of sexual abuse or maltreatment. Many others are deserted by their parents. These children have no home and have to steal to get food, and they get no education. They are received with contempt and hatred--fair game to kill or use for prostitution, drug traffic, and all sorts of crimes. They have no rights at all.

What do we really know about their life? Those who live in the same cities as the street-children just see the bad side. They are just criminals to them. Wealthy people in Rio de Janeiro, for example, probably do not know more about their real conditions than we do in Sweden.

In 1981 a Swedish author, Mats Larsson, wrote two books for young adults about street-children in Colombia, and these books shocked both children and adults because of their naked description. What is more important, they started a movement among the Swedish students to raise money for the children and to rouse public opinion to make it more difficult for the governments to ignore the situation of these children. One of the books, *Gatans Barn (Children of the Street)* is an easy-reader about a boy's gang living in the streets of Bogota. These children steal and commit other crimes; there are fights both within and between the different gangs, but there is also a total solidarity. They protect and help each other when necessary. This is a very dark book, or more realistically a book where the author does not try to beautify their lives. The main character dies at the end, hit by a car because he is too weak, suffering from a stomach disease, and can not cross a street fast enough.

Mats Larsson's latest book, *Gatflickan (The Street Girl)*, is a cruel, very pessimistic, but credible book about the organized hunt for street-children in Rio de Janeiro. The shop owners hire death patrols to kill them during the nights, patrols that often consist of free-lancing policemen. One can say that these activities are in a way officially approved since the killers never, or almost never, get caught or sentenced. Esmeralda is about 12 years old when her mother's lover sells her body to an American tourist. She runs away and becomes one of the children who live on the beach where stealing, begging, and prostitution is a part of their daily life. Their world is very dangerous. There is, of course, always a risk that they might get caught, but what she fears the most is not starvation or the police, it is the death patrols. "Those who come at night to kill us. They say that they do not exist, and I know that you would like to believe it, but I have to disappoint you. There are several kinds. Those with their balls hard laced in tight jeans and with pill-swelling muscles are the ones I fear most. That kind strangles. They surprise us when we lie alone and unprotected, and their hands are closed around our necks and something is crashing under your skin, cartilage perhaps or cervical vertebrae and our arms and legs hit, kick, and twitch in the death struggle. We rarely escape that kind of hands. Then there is the kind we call friend of order. His clothes are looser and he kills with the same determination as he takes a shower. He looks like a friend of the family, someone who sat at your table and ate what was put on it. He gave you little presents, but he earned it by killing us."<sup>8</sup> (my translation)

The books I have dealt with so far are either about people who have to leave their native country or about poor people or social drop-outs within a community. It is also important to get to know others that are not like you, whether they have another religious belief, are handicapped, or otherwise live in a different way. Most of us believe that our way of life is the right one, but who can tell what is right or what is wrong. Hanna Johansen tells in her book *Die Ente und die Eule (Are You A Real Owl? Said The Wild Duck)*, a story about an owl and a wild duck who meet one day. Neither of them can understand the other, and they argue about everything. Everything about the other is strange, how and what they eat, where they live and so on. All their arguments finish the same way; they accept that the other

has his way of living. "This is not true," said the owl. "I'm not doing it wrongly; I just do it in another way, and that is all right too. I simply do it in the owl way. I do it in the wild duck way. You're right. This isn't anything you have to argue about."<sup>9</sup> (my translation from the Swedish edition) They are correct, you must have the right to live your life the way it suits you best as long as you do not hurt anybody.

We all are products of our society and the way we have been raised. Norman Silver tells in his book, *No Tigers In Africa*, about a white family who moves from South Africa to England. Selwyn has never considered himself a racist, but he is shocked by the way black and white are together in England. They even kiss in public, and nothing happens to them! No one understands him even if he tries to explain, "Anyway, we had this discussion about apartheid, which I don't agree with, no way, though I've never taken much interest in politics. He said all the people of south Africa should have a vote. "No, you don't know what it's like there," I said. "Most black people don't know what voting's about." "But all people are the same," Jeff said. "They should mix together and have the same rights." "No, people are all different," I said. "They shouldn't mix together in a mixmaster if they don't want it." "But don't you think all people are equal?" he asked. "Of course," I said. "You think I'm in favor of apartheid. My family votes for change. Honestly. But most of the blacks aren't educated enough to have a proper vote. They should be allowed to elect their own black leaders, and leave the whites to vote in the government." Jeez, that made him wild. He looked at me like I was a criminal. And he would-n't speak to me after than..<sup>10</sup> This book at least made me for the first time understand the deep effect the apartheid system has on people, and it is an excellent book for young adults when you discuss the impact of political or social systems. It also shows very clearly the psychological effect the encounter with another political system might have on people moving from one country to another.

I do not know what is most difficult for the uninitiated to understand, ethnical or religious conflicts, but the hidden walls between people are often even more effective than those you can see. You do not make friends between the groups, and a Serb does not marry a Croat, a Jew not an Arab, or in Northern Ireland a protestant a catholic. This does not mean that there are not any exemptions, but they have to

face many difficulties and are often harassed by both groups. Joan Lingard has written a trilogy about a protestant girl and a catholic boy from Belfast who fall in love with each other. It all begins on the eighth of July when Sadie and her brother sneak in on catholic territory. Someone had destroyed their mural of King Billy. Catholics, of course, and Sadie and her brother are going to take revenge the next night. She is caught and meets Kevin for the first time. They begin to like each other, but their friendship is impossible since they come from two different worlds and she knows that her father would get a heart attack if he knew they were friends. Their falling in love is even more impossible, and Kevin is attacked by his friends who call him traitor. Sadie gets noticed, and a friend who lets them meet in his house is killed by a Molotov cocktail. They know that they can not stay in Belfast and decide to leave for London.

It is impossible to understand this **stubbornness** when you look upon it from outside. The way one group talks about the other is more or less like the owl and the wild duck, except that the groups in real life neither talk to each other nor come to the conclusion that you can do things in your own way. I think that one of our responsibilities as librarians, as teachers, and as human beings is to counteract this lack of understanding and respect.

Let me finish this book odyssey by quoting Pierre Bourgeat, a Danish writer. His book *Den Lange Rejse* (*The Long Journey*) tells about a boy who lives in a country in the middle of the world where the sun always shines and where palms grow everywhere, but one day some men arrive. "They were tall and dark and wore long, strange clothes I did not recognize. They came, and they went and took my father with them even if he did not want to. They did not say why or where they took him. They just took him." (my translation from the Swedish edition) And later on they burned his house and the boy and his family have to leave. They go to another country. "We arrived in a town with many people, with cars and high houses that were not built of clay. And here we live. Here are people that I do not know and children who speak a language I do not understand, but they can play with a ball, just like me. They can laugh too, just like me."<sup>11</sup> (my translation from the Swedish edition) This is a picture book, painted in mild water-colors, warm and bright in the beginning but the colors change with the story, and when the boy looks through the window in his new home, the color is as grey

as he feels. I think that he, as well as every child on earth, deserves warm, bright colors in their life, and that all of us, children and adults, must contribute in making it a good and dignified life.

Some problems are too delicate to leave to textbooks and I have tried to show how fiction can be used when working with complex issues such as refugees and immigration. But a fiction based teaching demands a well equipped school library and librarians and teachers who can introduce the books to the students. The books I have presented are books I have found in Sweden and a major part of them are unfortunately not translated into English. But I am convinced that there are other books in your countries that will serve the same purpose. It is not the titles that are most important, it is the model! This model can also be used when working with other topics, e.g. geography, history, emotions, and relations. It is ultimately a question of what you want to achieve with the teaching superficial, or profound knowledge. The textbook will probably be soon forgotten but a good novel will stay in your mind for a long time.

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## Irish Literature in Austria

by  
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Preparing my topic, "Irish literature in Austria," was a pleasant time for me indeed because whenever I mentioned Ireland to people everybody responded warmly with a nostalgic smile. Austrians can satisfy a little bit of their desire for some continental Irishness with regular ceilidh sessions in Vienna, Gaelic language courses, Irish dancing courses, and evening courses in Irish literature attended by all age groups.

This cannot just be due to a stereotype tourist image of Ireland as a sort of cooler Arcadia. I believe it is also due to cultural links that we are not always aware of, but that certainly exist and cannot be denied.

There is a common Celtic heritage that Austria shares with Ireland. I dare not talk much about the Celts to an Irish audience, of course, as this would mean carrying coal to Newcastle. Just let me mention that a lot of Celtic customs have survived in Austria, especially in the Alps, but unlike in Ireland, not much of the Celtic language. However, it left its traces in numerous Austrian field-names, names of rivers, and place names. The names of our capital Vienna and the river Danube, for instance, are derived from Celtic.

Apart from such loose linguistic links there are far more direct historical connections between Ireland and Austria. These are the foundations of monasteries by the Irish monks.

There was, for instance, Saint Virgil who became bishop of Salzburg and after his canonization in 1233, Saint Virgil became one of the patron saints of Salzburg.

For another Irish monk, Columban, his Irish origin was of tragic consequence. On his pilgrimage to the Holy Country, his strange language, Gaelic, and his foreign way to dress made him suspicious. He was taken for a spy and executed in 1012 at a place called Stockerau near Vienna. So you may call him the first victim of the Gaelic language. After his canonization, he was worshipped as patron saint of Lower Austria and Vienna until 1663. You can see his tomb in the monastery of Melk, one of the two Benedictine monasteries along the

Danube which were originally founded by Irish monks in the 11th century.

There is a church in Vienna called *Schottenkirche*, which was also an Irish foundation of the 12th century when Irish monks were called from Regensburg to Vienna. Its name goes back to the fact that at that time Ireland was called *Scotia maior*. Today the monastery of Schottenkirche also runs a boys' boarding school of high standard called *Schottengymnasium*. On St. Patrick's Day the monks of Schottenkirche remember their "Irish roots" with a special festival service.

But the Irish influence is not only spiritual church affairs; one of Vienna's popular worldly tourist attractions got its name from an Irish monk. I mean the horse cabs called *Fiaker* in which tourists like to be taken round the city. The name of these horse cabs goes back to the year 1650 and to a mural on a house in Paris depicting the Irish St. Fiacrus. This house, a hospital or a hotel, is said to have been the first "agency" to rent hackneys. In Austria *Fiaker* later became the name of such Austrian horse cabs or their drivers. St. Fiacrus is the patron saint of gardeners. He is said to save you from various illnesses and delicate complaints such as hemorrhoids, by the way, for which the colloquial French expression is *mal de Saint Fiacre*.

Finally, let me briefly mention the *Wild Geese* that form perhaps a less peaceful but nevertheless memorable link between Irish and Austrian history. From the 17th century on, they fought not only in Spanish and French armies, but also in Austrian regiments. Irish generals assisted the Austrian Emperor against the Turks during the second Turkish Siege in 1683. They also commanded the regiments of Empress Maria Theresa in the Seven Years' War. In our Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt there hang quite a few portraits of Austria's Wild Geese who established their reputation in Austria's military history.

When I think of Austrians who lived in Ireland there is the philosopher Wittgenstein who comes to my mind. He spent the summer of 1948 in a cottage at the mouth of Kilary Port

in Rosro, Connemara. Wittgenstein with whom, I must confess, the average Austrian is not very familiar seems to be better known to some local Irish people. It happened to my husband some years ago on a pub crawl in Galway that an old man, understanding that he was talking to an Austrian, insisted on discussing Wittgenstein with him. After several pints of Guinness, however, this turned out to be a difficult job for both of them.

Of course we Austrians are also still proud of the fact that when James Joyce went to live in Italy, Trieste was part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. But mentioning James Joyce, I would now like to turn to Irish literature.

### Irish Literature

The questions I asked myself were: "How familiar is the average Austrian reader with Irish literature? What kind of contemporary Irish fiction or drama is regarded representative of Ireland by publishers so that it would be translated into German? What kind of Irish drama is performed on our stages and how well known is Ireland in our children's literature?"

Since the Austrian book market depends to a large degree on Germany, I will not only refer to Austrian publications of Irish authors. Unfortunately, as concerns contemporary Irish authors, there are only two. Namely Tom McCaughren with his wildlife books, published by Jugend & Volk, and Martin Waddell with *Can't You Sleep*, *Little Bear* and *Let's Go Home*, *Little Bear* published by Annette Betz Verlag. By Irish literature in Austria I mean all publications of Irish literature as they are available in Austria. These are books in German translations as well as books in the English language.

Let me turn to the originals first. Though the majority of readers in Austria gets acquainted with foreign literature through translations, there are also people in Austria who would rather read the original English versions instead of translations, whether for professional reasons or for their studies or as a hobby.

Among these books *Across the Barricades*, *My Left Foot* and *Cat* are the favorites at the moment. Joan Lingard is regarded as an Irish author, and *Across the Barricades* belongs to the *de facto* standard curriculum of English at secondary schools. Obviously film adaptations are also responsible for the success of books like

*Cat*, *My Left Foot*, *Ulysses*, or *The Dead*. Particularly the film *My Left Foot* seems to be very popular with young people. Last winter there was also an increasing demand for the works of Brian Friel, which is obviously due to lectures on contemporary Irish literature at the University of Vienna.

Unfortunately one must be very patient when ordering Irish publications in Austria. Copies ordered in small quantities are either comparatively expensive or take an awfully long time. Booksellers often advise you to wait for a British paperback edition or you take a long book list with you on your next Ireland holiday. In a way, it is a paradoxical situation. The more Irish publishing is developing, the more complicated it is occasionally in Austria to get hold of Irish books.

Concerning translations into German, all the Irish literary classics are of course available, but Irish literature is often still understood and classified as Commonwealth literature, as is done for example in the German standard reference work on international literature, *Kindlers Literaturlexikon*. In addition, many Irish authors have their books printed in Britain and translations usually run as "translations from English," not Irish English. So readers or booksellers cannot always distinguish between English and Irish authors.

In addition, it must be said that among the host of books that are produced every year Irish literature plays only a minor role, although booksellers generally observe an increasing interest in it on the part of the readers. While James Joyce, with *Ulysses* and *Dubliners*, is the Irish long-time bestselling author. Flann O'Brien is a new cult author, published by Hoffmanns Verlag who recently also brought out new translations of *Tristram Shandy* and *An Ideal Husband*.

The tremendous popularity of Flann O'Brien with insiders, especially of *Thirst* and *At Swim-Two-Birds*, is certainly due to the initiative of Harry Rowohlt, who also translated James Joyce, Anthony Burgess and *Winnie the Pooh*.

Rowohlt is a special character. About two years ago, for example, in order to promote his translation of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, he gave a highly acclaimed non-stop reading performance in Vienna, lasting about twenty hours. Last autumn he played a role in his own stage adaptation of *At Swim-Two-Birds*. It was performed in a derelict coffin factory in Vienna and was so popular that it was booked out for three

weeks in advance and had to be prolonged for another fortnight.

There are also other publishers who offer a wide range of Irish authors, such as Diogenes of Switzerland, for example, who publishes Laurence Sterne, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Oscar Wilde, Sean O'Casey, Liam O'Flaherty, Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, Edna O'Brien, Brian Moore, Bernard MacLaverty, a James Joyce anthology, and several anthologies of Irish short stories.

I think, a person who must not be overlooked in this context is Heinrich Böll, not only because his *Ein irisches Tagebuch (An Irish Diary)* initiated an Irish boom on the continent. Böll deserves special mentioning not only as a translator of the works of Sean O'Casey, Brendan Behan, Liam O'Flaherty for instance, but also of the English version of Tom O'Crohan's *Islandman* into German, which recently saw its third new edition.

As to translations of contemporary Irish fiction, I find that the nineties have been a particularly productive period. For example, Diogenes Publishers did not only continue their program of Irish classics in new editions or new translations, but they also systematically focus on contemporary authors.

One of them is Brian Moore. After *Catholics*, translated in 1978, there followed a break of eleven years, but since 1989 eight more titles, including *Judith Hearne*, have been brought out, most of them immediately after their original publications. There is Bernard MacLaverty with *Lamb, Cal*, and *Secrets*. *A Time to Dance* was published just a few weeks ago. Also Christopher Nolan's *Under the Eye of the Clock* was brought out very soon in German, and Christy Brown's *My Left Foot* was reprinted in 1990. In addition, there is John Banville's *Book of Evidence* of 1989, which was translated in 1991. It received an excellent review in the Austrian newspaper *Die Presse*. John McGahern's *Amongst Women* was published both in English and in German within the same year. His *The Pornographer* is planned next.

I do not want just to list work after work, let me just mention one more title that struck me for a special reason: Among all these translations, the German publication of John B. Keane's *Letter's of an Irish Parish Priest*, which also came out in German last year, is the only one that does not say "translated from English," but "translated from Irish English."

I may be exaggerating, but in a way this seems to reveal a new attitude. It stresses that

Irish literature is no longer Commonwealth literature.

These modern works of fiction are, of course, to be understood and read against their special Irish background, I would say. They do not, apart from *Cal* perhaps, focus specifically on the *Troubles*, nor are they historical novels. I feel they are read not because the average readers want to read them because of the *Troubles*, but because they just want to read good literature. No matter whether it is political or not. It struck me, for instance, that in my local district library where average working class people would borrow books, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* is read much more frequently than *Cal*, although the English version of *Cal* sells quite well.

As concerns poetry, one really can not speak of a boom with Seamus Heaney obviously being the only contemporary poet represented, but similar to modern fiction, Heaney's poems were translated in the 90s. *Government of the Tongue* came out just recently in the spring.

I would say one cannot overlook an increasing focussing of German publishers on Irish contemporary fiction. What I personally miss among these publications, however, is literature by Irish women.

At present you get only few works of Edna O'Brien, only few reprints of Eilis Dillon's books (apart from some of her children's books), you do not get Julia O'Faolain, Jennifer Johnston, Mary Lavin, or Meta Maine Reid. There are none of Lingard's adult novels available, no Polly Devlin, Maeve Binchy, Nelly MacCafferty or Una Troy. There were quite a few translations of some of these women writers in the 60s and 70s, but they have not been reprinted. If you want to read these you have to rely on second-hand bookshops or on public libraries where several of them have their loyal fans. Although modern women writers are included in short story collections or in anthologies like *Frauen in Irland (Women in Ireland)*, I found no new editions and no collected works of Irish women writers.

### Irish Theatre

I was also interested in Irish plays on our stages, so I checked the programs of Vienna's theatres over the last twenty-five years. Various plays of G. B. Shaw and Oscar Wilde, as well as Sean O'Casey and Samuel Beckett have frequently been performed on various stages in Vienna. In the 70s there was also Joyce's *Exiles* on the program and an adapta-

tion of *Stephen Dedalus* by Hugh Leonard. J. M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* or Brendan Behan's *Hostage* were performed by smaller experimental stages.

We are proud of having two theatres in Vienna that perform plays exclusively in English throughout the year and eighty percent of their audience are local people. In 1972 Vienna's English Theatre produced Brian Friel's *Lovers* and in 1980 Abbey Theatre players performed Sean O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman*. In addition to these classics, one of our theatres, Volkstheater (People's Theatre) and its experimental studio responded to political issues of the time. It was not only a production of *Juno and the Paycock* that drew attention to Irish history, there also was Brian Friel's *Freedom of the City* in 1977. In 1986 they brought out the first German production of *Tea in a China Cup* by the Belfast writer Christina Reid. They also did *Flashpoint* by the British writer Tom Kempinsky in 1989 which had already been performed in Linz, Upper Austria two years before. Though it is not an Irish play I would like to mention it in this context as it deals with the British army in Northern Ireland, and because it has been broadcast twice on Austrian TV.

The leaflets that went with these plays all contained well-written outlines of modern Irish history, authentic background material to the *Troubles*, and offered useful explanations of the political situation to the average audience. With those productions the theatre tried to respond to that situation, and as venue of lively discussion, it met an audience interested in events of their time.

However, I found no other contemporary Irish plays on our programs that, similar to Irish fiction, would cover other topics than political ones. There would be George Bernard Shaw or Oscar Wilde, or Sean O'Casey's *The End of the Beginning*, written fifty-five years ago which was on the program last spring, but there are no recent contemporary playwrights performed in Austria.

Our audience is not familiar with playwrights such as Thomas Kilroy and Tom Murphy or John B. Keane, and hardly any of the works of Brian Friel are known in Austria.

### Children's Literature

In Austria as well as elsewhere books like *Gulliver's Travels*, or stories like *The Happy Prince*, *The Selfish Giant* or *Canterville Ghost* have become classics and have been translated

and illustrated numerous times. You may know the beautiful edition of *Canterville Ghost* published by the Salzburg publishing house Neugebauer Press with the sensitive illustrations by the prize-winning Austrian illustrator Lisbeth Zwerger.

Austrian children can also choose among a wide range of Celtic and Irish tales for different age groups. There are numerous anthologies of Celtic tales available, quite a few edited by Frederik Hetman, an expert in Celtic mythology, but the present Celtic wave that is sweeping over Austria from Germany seems to attract adult rather than young readers. When I checked the children's departments of public libraries in Vienna, I found only a few borrowings of Celtic tales, whereas academic or bibliophilic editions that clearly aim at adult readers have been reprinted several times in the last few years.

Although a lot of Eilis Dillon's books were translated in the 60s, several of them by Heinrich Böll, contemporary Irish children's fiction is hardly represented on the German bookmarket. Last year 371 children's books were published in Austria, sixty-five of them were translations. Forty-six of these were translations from the English, but only one had an Irish author, namely Waddell's *Let's Go Home, Little Bear*. Only two years ago our International Institute of Children's Literature in Vienna could not even give me information on a single Irish children's writer. Later I discovered that they did have several English copies of books by Patricia Lynch, Eilis Dillon, and Martin Waddell in their archives, but since these books were British publications, their authors were not identified as Irish.

Similarly, in the German standard reference book on children's literature, the *Lexikon der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, edited by Klaus Doderer in 1984, you find the essay on Ireland by Eileen Power not under the letter "I" between Iran and Israel, but in the supplementary volume. In addition, a mistake in the German translation of this essay turns Eilis Dillon into a male writer. The date of that encyclopedia being 1976, it naturally contains no information on recent children's fiction.

Eilis Dillon is one of the few contemporary Irish writers whose children's books have been translated into German. Others are Tom McCaughren, Martin Waddell, and I also include Joan Lingard, who as the author of the Kevin and Sadie books as an Irish writer. Quite a few works of Eilis Dillon were trans-

lated by Heinrich and Annemarie Böll in the 60s and published by Herder, who also have a branch in Vienna. At present, of her children's fiction, *The Lost Island*, *Island of the Horses*, and *The Shadow of Vesuvius* are available in new publications and republications, partly in paperback editions. Nine other ones, including *The Cruise of Santa Maria*, and *The Seals*, all translated and published in the 60s have not been reprinted. I can only speculate about the reasons for this. Perhaps the traditional adventure story has lost its attraction when wild islands lie within easy reach from the airports, and TV provides even more exciting adventures with a switch of the button. It might also be that adventure stories for individualists are not desirable in a society that demands the conformity of young consumers.

Two of Tom McCaughren's wildlife books, one of which, *White Ravens*, was on the list found an Austrian publisher, Jugend & Volk. They are also included in the program of our Austrian Book Club whose members can get certain recommended books cheaper. However, McCaughren's historical novels or *Rainbows of the Moon* are not yet available in German.

Martin Waddell is no longer a stranger in Austria. I am happy that the Austrian publishing house Annette Betz that specializes in picture books edited *Can't You Sleep, Little Bear* in 1988 and *Let's Go Home, Little Bear* in 1991. The latter was awarded the Austrian State Prize for Children's Literature in April. *Sam Vole and His Brothers* (I hope this is the correct title) is planned for next year. Perhaps these Austrian activities make up a bit for the fact that hardly anybody in Austria knows Waddell as Catherine Sefton although she won *The Other Award* for *Starry Night* and should be known to German and Austrian publishers.

I do wish the recognition and popularity of Waddell might convince our publishers also of the literary merits of Catherine Sefton. I am optimistic, though, that Catherine Sefton will soon be better known at least among Austrian teachers of English. Last year a team of English teachers brought out a booklet called "77 Young Adult Novels," intended to encourage the use of teenage fiction in the English classroom. This brochure includes reviews of Sefton's *Ireland-Trilogy* and also of Joan Lingard's *Guilty Party*. The same team has also produced an excellent English coursebook for secondary schools with reading tips after each unit. The unit on Ireland in the last volume for students in their last year recommends for

further reading not only Brendan Behan, Brian Friel, James Joyce, Bernard MacLaverty, Flann O'Brien, Frank O'Connor, but also Tom McCaughren's *Rainbows of the Moon* and Catherine Sefton's *Ulster Trilogy*. So, although the German bookmarket ignores Irish juvenile literature too much, at least a light wind of change seems to be blowing in our schoolbooks.

The best known Irish juvenile book in Austria is Joan Lingard's *Across the Barricades*. The first three volumes of the Kevin and Sadie books are available in German, also in paperback editions. Altogether, nine more of her books have been translated, including *Strangers in the House* and *The Guilty Party*. These two books were presented just recently in May and June in a very successful Austrian children's and teenagers' program called "Fortsetzung folgt nicht" ("Not to be Continued"). In this series, which is also broadcast in Germany and Switzerland, the beginning or some crucial scenes of a book are acted out, partly by amateur actors, but the ending is not revealed. If you want to know that, you must read the book yourself. This is the only Austrian teenage program for book reviews, and it provides successful promotion for the respective books. There is quite a competition among publishing houses to have their books included in this show as it helps to sell more copies of the specific books than are sold before Christmas. The School Library Service Centre in Vienna lends the video tapes to teachers who want to introduce these books to their classes. I am mentioning all this to show that the mass media need not necessarily distract from reading but may also support it.

It was the books of Joan Lingard that made me interested in Ulster children's fiction. I do know that there are quite a few books written and published both in Ireland and in Britain focussing on the political situation of Ireland. Several have not been translated into German, or like *The Deserter* by Nigel Gray was translated very soon but have not been reprinted. This does not mean that Northern Ireland has not been a topic in Austrian or German children's literature. I found that, similar to our theatres, Northern Ireland was a topic of various German juvenile books already in the 70s and 80s, several years before Joan Lingard's books were edited in German (1986), and years before Sefton's *Ulster Trilogy* (1986-1989) was written or McCaughren's *Rainbows of the Moon* (1989) or *Stan* (1988) by Ann Pilling, for instance. Those were books by German

writers; some were documentary reports on Northern Irish children in crossfire. Another one was by an Austrian. There was even a translation from the Dutch. The latter is out of print together with other ones that were perhaps too didactic, too one-sided, or that focussed too explicitly on violence and militant aspects.

Apart from Joan Lingard's books, there are two quite different books on Northern Ireland that are successful on the German and Austrian market, namely *London, 13. Juli* by Käthe Recheis and *Lorcan zieht in den Krieg* by Frederik Hetman.

Käthe Recheis is one of Austria's most prominent and highly respected children's writers. *London, 13. Juli*, written in 1975, won the Austrian State Prize and the Prize of the City of Vienna and has been reprinted numerous times. Its setting is not even Ireland, but the London of 1939 which one really forgets while reading. Sadly enough, it might as well be the London of 1992. The action takes place within a few days. The main figure is fifteen-year-old Noreen, daughter of Irish immigrants. She meets two Irish youths and suddenly gets involved in IRA activities and becomes a witness of IRA terrorism in London. The girl's father, hoping in vain that his daughter might never get involved in violence, never touched upon Irish history. However, he has to face the facts and is forced to explain things to her. Though Irish, Noreen is not very familiar with the Irish background and shares the limited range of experience with what I would like to call the "tourist-approach" of the young Austrian reader who also knows only little about Irish history. Together with Noreen the reader learns to understand what's going on and why. The book does not give an insight into everyday life in Ireland, but the author explains to her readers how violence became a political instrument in the course of Irish history and that, although the picture of violence may change, the roots are still there. At the same time she makes clear that, once let loose, terrorism follows its own rules and can't solve problems. Such an approach from outside or transferring the problem to another country seems to be a technique that lends itself to political teenage fiction.

*Lorcan zieht in den Krieg* by Frederik Hetman, written in the same year (1977) won the Swiss La Vache qui lit award and saw a new edition in 1989. Not approaching from outside, this book is set in Donegal and combines motives of adventurous fiction with

the military activities of the IRA. Lorcan, thirteen-year-old son of an IRA activist, is fascinated by the glamour of power of his boastful father. He decides also to become such a hero and together with his faithful friend from a tinker family goes north to look for his father and join him in order to fight for the *cause*. Living in a world of heroic fantasy, the two boys resemble Don Quixote and Sancho Panza rather than genuine heroes. Disillusioned with the unheroic activities of his father, Lorcan finally returns home as a different person and is done with false heroism and war. What was fantastically intended as going to war becomes a true conversion to peace. Authentic descriptions of the landscape of Donegal reveal the author to be an expert on Ireland, and some original Irish legends that are woven into the story might make the reader think it was written by an Irish author. Also this book does not really portray Irish everyday life. In spite of its historical, sort of militant tales, it is almost a pacifist fantasy with the adventures taking place in the boy's imagination. In the afterward to the second edition of 1989, the author wants it to be understood as a warning against the dangerous fascination of power and violence and as a general challenge to peace addressing all countries.

Käthe Recheis, Frederik Hetman, and Joan Lingard have emerged as the Ireland authorities on the German market. This means that there is no book on Northern Ireland available at the moment that was written by a writer who was born and still lives in Ireland or Northern Ireland. In addition, the sad fact that the political situation in Ireland won't be solved in the near future makes it easy for publishers to put Ireland aside for a while and to turn to other important topics. So for example, Peter Carter's novel on Eastern Germany, *Bury the Dead* was translated just in time before the fall of the Berlin wall, whereas there is still no German edition of his Belfast novel. *Under Goliath* written much earlier in 1977. Obviously publishers feel sure that the Ulster problem will not be outdated too soon.

Meanwhile not only the recent rapid developments just across our border and in Eastern Europe have changed the scenery and the topics of German juvenile fiction. There has, for example, also been an increasing interest in Latin America, in environmental issues, or in topics that used to be explicitly taboo in children's fiction only a few years ago. It is not my task here to answer the question whether or

not this breaking of taboos in children's literature is in favor of the child or in favor of the bookmarket. Anyway, this change in topics and interest might perhaps account for the absence of more recent books from Ireland in Austria.

We do have few children's books written in German that are set in Ireland and that are not political. One of the early books of Käthe Recheis, *Martys Irischer Sommer*, (*Marty's Irish Summer*) which was reprinted in spring does not focus on political events but is the story of a family crisis during a journey through Ireland.

There is a new edition of a book called *Jenseits von Aran* (*On the Other Side of Aran*) by Arnulf Zitelmann, a writer of various historical adventure novels for children. It deals with the Celtic kings of Old Ireland of about 400 A.D.

Recently I came across a lovely, funny book for younger children *Die Windwette* (*The Wind Bet*) published by Thienemann, 1991 with the landscape of Connemara as a background. It is about a rabbit, not about the *Troubles* and provides a very warm impression of Ireland although it does not have an Irish but a German author, Sigrid Heuck, who is a fan of Ireland.

I do not want to make a mountain out of a molehill, but I do wish these German and Austrian books, together with those of Eilis Dillon, Tom McCaughren, Martin Waddell of Joan Lingard, or even the recommendation of Tom O'Crohan's *The Islandman* in the juvenile fiction section of *Die Zeit*, might indicate a new readiness for children's books with an Irish background, but why shouldn't they be by Irish authors?

## Conclusion

Summing up briefly, I would say that as far as the theatre is concerned, we have not only had a wide range of productions of classical Irish writers such as Shaw, Wilde, Behan, Synge, and O'Casey. Plays produced in the 80s also served as a platform to deal with the political issues of Ireland. However, apart from these, there are no contemporary plays performed on the Austrian stage at the moment or plays that would reflect new trends in modern Irish drama.

As for fiction, the outstanding celebrities are James Joyce and Flann O'Brien. Writers of modern Irish fiction are better known in Austria than modern Irish playwrights, and independent of political issues, they are accepted on the bookmarket and appreciated by the readers. I

do feel, though, that women writers are less represented at the moment than some years ago.

As to modern Irish children's literature, I regret that there is too little awareness of its existence in my country, although Ireland serves as a background of several German and Austrian children's books.

I do wish, therefore that a conference like this might contribute to giving Irish children's fiction more recognition in the future, not only in our English classrooms but also on the shelves of our bookshops.

# Books and Media for All South African Children in the 21st Century?

by

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It is necessary for children to be able to use books and other media effectively now and in the future. However, before children can learn to be effective users of books and media they have to have access to these items, and in many developing countries this is not the case. In this paper an attempt will be made to determine what obstacles there are to all South African children having access to books and other media, and whether these obstacles can be overcome.

For the purposes of this paper a distinction will be made between problems of physical access and problems of intellectual access to books and other media. This is an artificial categorization as these problems influence each other. Some problems of physical access that have been identified in South Africa as well as in other African countries are mentioned here.

- \* Poor socio-economic conditions for most of the population. Tawete (1991:123) points out that poverty is prevalent in most African countries. In South Africa the greatest proportion of the population is poor.
- \* Books and periodicals, many of which are imported, are expensive and the exchange rate is unfavorable. This means that fewer items can be purchased for both homes and libraries. Banjo (1991:108) and Lotho (1991:142) have pointed out that the high prices of books are beyond the purchasing power of the average Zambian and Nigerian respectively, and one could say that this is also true for the average South African.
- \* The rapid population growth means large numbers of new schools have to be built each year. Priorities are for the provision of sufficient classrooms, furniture, equipment, and the training of staff for the additional schools. Mabomba (1991:11) has also mentioned this problem with regard to other countries in the Southern African region and it is certainly true with regard to the fast growing population in South Africa, where approximately 200 new schools are needed annually.
- \* The majority of the primary schools in South Africa do not have school libraries, only boxes of books in classrooms. Bristow (1990) carried out research in Venda, which is one of the so-called *independent* states, and which is a typically underdeveloped rural area. She found that there was a viable school library in only eleven of the 155 secondary schools, and none at all in the four hundred primary schools.
- \* Where school libraries do exist in secondary schools for black pupils, they usually have small collections with approximately two books per pupil. There is also a lack of audiovisual media and a lack of information technology. Another horrifying fact that emerged from Bristow's (1991:8) investigation in Venda was that a total of only R20,000 (or £4,000) was made available for the purchase of library materials in all of those 555 schools that year (this amounts to R36 or approximately £7 per school) (1990:8).
- \* Many areas, especially rural areas, lack even public library facilities. For example, two townships outside Pretoria, Mabopane and Ga-Rankuwa, with estimated populations of 96,000 and 86,000 respectively have no public libraries to serve them. In the province of Natal there are nine public libraries in townships while there are four hundred in areas previously reserved for white people only.
- \* There is a multiplicity of languages in the country, but there are still relatively few books published locally and of these very few are in indigenous languages. There are also relatively few African Writers. Mabomba (1991:11), Mchombu (1991:29), and Tawete (1988:330) all refer to similar situations existing in other African countries. The problem, of course, is that school children and literate people must read books in languages which are not in their mother tongue.

Not only do all these problems regarding the physical access to books exist, but there are also numerous problems associated with intellectual access to books and other media.

- \* Approximately three quarters of the population in South Africa is either completely illiterate or functionally illiterate. Most of the population has no tradition of reading as its cultural tradition has been oral rather than print. Again this is a problem that South Africa shares with most other African countries. Mchombu (1991:29) states that, "illiteracy rates are too high to enable people, especially in rural areas and urban shanty townships, to appreciate use of libraries." Lotho (1991:143) points out that the traditional social structure does not encourage reading. The main reasons for this are the oral tradition, little privacy and quiet in homes, the absence of electricity, and the fact that children are expected to help with many of the chores. It is also "considered serious anti-social behavior to be found reading."
- \* For the majority of children there is a lack of cognitive stimulation in early childhood, because often parents have little time to spend with their children or do not understand the value of language stimulation by means of discussion and storytelling. Many parents are also illiterate. Lotho (1991:144), writing about the situation in Nigeria, also mentions the lack of cognitive development necessary for reading during child-rearing because of the lack of toys and books in homes and the lack of public libraries. These factors may also contribute to the 25% drop-out rate for black children in South Africa in their first year at primary school (Olén 1991).
- \* Pupils are not always encouraged by their teachers to read books even when there are classroom collections or school libraries as the teachers themselves do not always understand the value of additional reading. There has been a long history of the authoritarian teacher and pupils doing rote learning. Thus it is often only those children who come from homes where the parents are literate who will actually read the books. Tawete (1988:333) says that there "is the disbelief on the part of educationists that libraries have a value." He points out that the educational system encourages the use of textbooks only, and he

also emphasizes the problem of teachers who have little or no background of library use and who thus cannot appreciate that the school library should be at the heart of teaching and learning in the school (1991:127,129). That the matric examination can be passed by means of rote learning from set textbooks also holds true in South Africa.

- \* There are few qualified school librarians. Osei-Bonsu (1990:102) mentions that the secondary school libraries in Ghana are staffed by untrained personnel. The situation with regard to many of the schools for black pupils in South Africa is similar.
- \* Many teachers in the schools do not have adequate qualifications and are not information literate. According to Kakoma (1991:7-8) the teacher-training curriculum in Zambia emphasizes teacher-based education rather than resource-based education. This means that teachers lack the knowledge and training to start or manage school libraries. Teachers are also not given training in integrating the school library into the curriculum.

If there were sufficient good pre-schools some of these problems, such as the lack of early cognitive stimulation and introduction to print materials could be addressed, but in fact pre-schools are few and far between. Because of the widespread poverty and the annual need for large numbers of additional primary schools, it does not seem likely that there will be a significant growth in pre-schools in the immediate future.

The need for more research is required for the solution of some of the other problems. For example, research is needed to determine the accessibility of the contents of books. When an author writes he postulates an audience. He has to know the tradition in which he is working. He can then create fictional roles that the reader is willing and eager to play. It is not an impossibility if both the reader and writer are familiar with the literary tradition in which they work. There are major differences between the story structures used in a literate and oral culture and the story structures of one culture may not be accessible to another culture. In South Africa, publishing is highly Eurocentric. It is largely controlled by white people's interests and money. Although there have been attempts in the recent past to publish books which are accessible and relevant to black

readers, this has been limited to looking at aspects such as a controlled vocabulary, situating books in South Africa, and providing a background and characters with which black children can identify. No thought has been given to story structure which may be a bigger handicap to accessibility than the color of the main character. Black traditional literature is structured orally and if children are exposed to stories at home these will be structured in this manner. Major characteristics of oral stories are:

- \* a lack of causality
  - \* no clear hero
  - \* no clear ending
  - \* a spiral structure rather than a linear structure as used in western literate tradition
  - \* no clear characterization
- the event happens to a person who has no control over it and can do little to affect the chain of events.

As a result black children may find literate stories in books intellectually less accessible. Research in this field is presently being carried out by Machet. (See Appendix 1 for an example of an oral story which has been transcribed and translated.)

Another important factor is the value structures reflected in books. Selectors are often unaware of the values reflected in books because these so closely reflect their own world view. In research carried out by Machet (1992) it was shown that different cultures have different value structures and this can effect the accessibility and interpretation of books. Havard-Williams (1992) has suggested that librarians should encourage many more Africans to write books for children which use material drawn from their own culture. Desktop publishing might be used to make these stories widely available so that early reading could be promoted.

In spite of the above-mentioned problems with regard to resources and school libraries, it appears that many African writers on librarianship are in agreement with their western counterparts who advocate the importance of good school libraries if the quality of education is to improve. To quote Tawete (1988:332):

With the support and encouragement from the teaching staff and librarian, students can be led to find the library not only a source of information

and knowledge but also as a stimulus to thought and experience.

Osei-Bonsu (1990:102) believes that the value of good school libraries lies in their stimulation of students' intellectual curiosity.

Despite this widespread belief in the contribution which school libraries can make to improving the quality of education one has to ask whether existing school library media centers are fully-utilized? If in fact they are under-utilized, are they worth all the effort and expense required for their establishment and maintenance? Mchombu (1991:26; 1991:184) states that there is plenty of data which "provides consistent evidence of the extremely low use and impact of library services in Africa." Fayose (1991:15) points out that libraries in schools are never used by teachers and also says that resources are badly organized. Bristow (1991:8), as was previously mentioned, found that only eleven of the 155 secondary schools in Venda had viable school libraries. But even these school library media centers are not properly utilized as the following facts indicate:

- \* in half of them the bookstock is not efficiently organized
- \* only one school gives regular media guidance to pupils
- \* only a third of the teachers in charge of the media center have any sort of relevant training
- \* the average number of fiction books is 1,130
- \* the average number of non-fiction books is 770
- \* only one school subscribes to a newspaper
- \* only 31% of teachers often use the media center for preparation
- \* only 13% of teachers often take pupils to the media center
- \* only 18% of teachers often send pupils to the media center
- \* only 7% of teachers are often involved in the selection of media.

However, even where there are good school libraries or media centers with adequate resources and a trained school librarian or media teacher, they often appear to be under-utilized by teachers and pupils only. This fact emerges when reading some of the literature on school libraries published in countries such as England. For example, Daniels (1983:57-58) carried out a survey in six schools and found

that resources are under-used, "their existence and potential not being appreciated by staff or pupils." Valentine and Nelson (1988:53, 55-56) also found that subject teachers, including many with university degrees, were neither very regular nor very effective school library users. Many subject teachers are also not comfortable using media in their lessons; they prefer the textbook and lecture method of teaching. Many do not understand the necessity of keeping up to date and do not read much themselves. Beswick (1986:158) states that the real problem is to influence what teachers do and feel they should do. It therefore appears that the major obstacle to the effective utilization of a school library, both in developed and in developing countries, is probably those teachers who do not promote the use of information in a variety of media and the use of the school library in their subject teaching.

Articles by, amongst others, Bernhard (1988; 1989), Fayose (1991), Hall (1986), Jones (1989), Kakoma (1991), Kruger (1990), Marland (1986; 1987), Mbambo (1990), and Squirrel (1989) all deal with aspects of this problem, and many suggest a similar solution: that in order for the school library not to remain an under-used resource, it will be necessary to ensure that the use of media in the school library and an understanding of the role of the school librarian become part of initial teacher training. Until this happens, "the full potential of both library and librarian will not be realized in secondary education" (Jones 1989:9).

One can thus accept the fact that there is a great need to educate the teachers regarding the multi-faceted role of the school library. McCrank (1991:41) says that "the real target of information literacy campaigns needs to be professional educators and academicians." Caywood (1991:52) also thinks there is a need "to address the place of information literacy in teacher education." What is needed are teachers who are convinced of the value of using information in their subjects and who have themselves learned how to continue learning. Teachers who are information literate will be able to incorporate study skills, media literacy, numeracy, graphic skills, computer literacy, problem-solving, cultural, political, and economic literacy in their school subjects. They will be able to motivate pupils to use media, and so achieve worthwhile teaching/learning experiences for their pupils.

Mbambo (1990:11) believes that in order for teachers to change their attitude and appreciate

the role of the school library they must learn this in their teacher training. In fact, Stewart (1990:9) goes so far as to suggest that colleges of education should give every interested teacher the opportunity of attending a year's course in school librarianship. Fayose (1991:16) believes that courses should be included which will introduce students to the basics of school librarianship including a knowledge of books, bibliographic sources, and the use of libraries. He suggests that if such training is offered to all students of education they will be able to encourage the children under their care to use books and libraries (1991:22).

The situation would appear to be similar in South Africa where the media center is too often seen by subject teachers to be an addition to, and not an integral part of their teaching practice and the educational aim of the school:

- \* few subject syllabi supply specific guidelines with regard to curricular media use
- \* subject inspectors generally do not promote curricular media use sufficiently in subject teaching
- \* curricular media use is not promoted sufficiently in teacher training (Overduin & De Wit 1986:806-807).

In 1990 the researcher carried out a survey of 603 first-year student teachers at colleges of education and universities in the Transvaal, South Africa, to obtain some idea of the use these students had made of the school library during their final year at school, and also to determine whether they had positive or negative perceptions of the school library. These students had all attended schools with a media center; that is, a library which includes a variety of both print and non-print media, and which was staffed by either a full-time or part-time media teacher. They had all received media user education for at least four years during their primary school education and for the first two years of their secondary school education.

Time does not permit a detailed discussion of the survey, but some of the results which are relevant to this paper are highlighted. While the students were in their final school year, 311 or 51.6 per cent of them visited the media center only once or twice during the year, or never visited it at all (See Figure 1). The primary activities of those who made use of the media center, were consulting ready reference works or using the media center as a place of

study. Although more than half the students read six or more books during the year, most of these books had apparently not been obtained from the media center (See Figure 2). The majority of the students; that is, 420 or 69.7 per cent had been taken by one or more of their subject teachers to the media center (See Figure 3). It is clear from the pie chart in Figure 4 that most of the students were taught by subject teachers who had used audiovisual media in their classrooms. In fact, 175 or 29 per cent of the students reported that more than three of their subject teachers had used audiovisual media in the classroom. The graph in Figure 5 indicates that most of the students were told by their subject teachers to make use of the media center, although in many cases these suggestions could have been made more frequently. From the above information it does appear as if the subject teachers are not as much to blame for the under-utilization of media centers as the literature would have us believe. If one compares the number of times some students visited the media center with the number of times they were taken to the media center by their subject teachers, it appears as if many of the students never made any voluntary use of the media center.

With regard to their perception of the media center most of the students found the media user education useful (See Figure 6). The majority also found the atmosphere in the primary school media center friendly (See Figure 7). Although the atmosphere in the secondary school media center was less friendly, it is evident from Figure 8 that most of the students still perceived it in a positive light.

That more students had positive than negative perceptions was also indicated by the two open questions in the questionnaire. Students were asked to describe any experiences they had had in the media center which had either a positive or negative influence on their feelings. While eighty-seven students did not describe any positive experience, there were 215 who had no negative experience worth relating. There were more students who had positive experiences than those who had negative experiences. There were 209 students who stated that the most positive aspect was the projects, and for resources used in the projects, they had gone to the media center. The second largest category of positive experiences were those of students who had liked going to the media center because it provided a quiet place to study. Third, students had liked the media

teacher, and fourth, they had enjoyed the audiovisual media available. The majority of the negative experiences which students had were linked to the behavior or personality of the media teacher. (One-hundred-thirty-three students had bad things to say about the media teacher as opposed to 120 positive comments on the media teacher). Other negative experiences were boring lessons, no bestsellers, inadequate and out of date resources, broken audiovisual equipment, and the rules and regulations, such as no talking and no eating as well as fines for overdue books. A number of these student teachers stated that the media center was a place where the *nerds* congregated. Perhaps as Heeks (1989:58) has suggested it is time to polish up on some of the traditional elements such as accommodation, organization, and stock. I would add to this the behavior and attitude of the media teacher in many of the secondary schools which is also obviously in need of some polishing.

In spite of more students having positive than negative perceptions of the media center, it was found that only about 22.4% of the group surveyed perceived media centers as contributing to their examination success (See Figure 9) while just one third of the group believed media centers had contributed to their personal development (See Figure 10).

Return to the quote given earlier from Tawete (1988:332) regarding the value of a school library:

"With the support and encouragement from the teaching staff and librarian, students can be led to find the library not only a source of information and knowledge but also as a stimulus to thought and experience."

We have to conclude that even when pupils have had the advantage of attending a school with a media center and a media teacher, two thirds of them complete their schooling without perceiving that the school media center can contribute to their information, knowledge, or personal development.

This perception may be a result of different factors. It may be that the value of the media center is not publicized sufficiently. Gawiti. (1990:21) has suggested that "we need to reshape our promotion orientation to the language and concepts of marketing." It is, however, more likely that school pupils, especially in secondary schools, are chiefly concerned with passing their final examination

and are only prepared to use the media center when their school work requires them to consult a ready reference work or as a quiet place to study. Does this not mean that we should investigate alternative models for school libraries, especially in secondary schools and especially in developing countries?

Are there any positive factors which could contribute to children in South Africa having access to books and other media? In fact there are a number of well-stocked and equipped media centers in the country. There are also centralized or regional media collections and services, such as the National Film Library and the Transvaal Education Media Service. There are a number of qualified media teachers in the country because training is available at some of the Colleges of Education and at the University of South Africa. The latter is a distance education institution, and courses are taken by correspondence. Qualified teachers may enroll for a Diploma in Specialized Education (Media Center Science).

READ Educational Trust, an independent, professional, non-profit, non-racial organization funded by the private sector, has focussed on primary schools, mainly those attended by black pupils, in order to promote reading, language competence, and learning skills. Book and story festivals, exhibitions, and competitions have been held to motivate pupils. READ has also undertaken activities such as: book selection, development of innovative materials for use by teachers, training courses for teachers, staff development in colleges, and special projects for adults.

In order to ensure equal access to books and other media for all the children of South Africa and also to address the imbalances of the past, a national policy for the new South Africa in this regard could be useful. Mchombu (1991:34-35) and Menou (1991) are among those who have suggested that it is important to establish national information policies. Although a national information policy may be a somewhat ambitious undertaking, it should at least be possible to develop a policy for school libraries.

READ held several Library Policy Workshops in 1991, after they had appointed a consultant on policy and a researcher to work on a framework for policy options for a national Library Policy for School and Community Libraries. The workshops were attended by representatives of interested groups and by experts in the field. More recently, in 1992, READ has joined in the research and discus-

sions being undertaken by the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) which also has a subgroup investigating a library policy for a post-apartheid South Africa. Library policy has been included in the policy investigation on support services in education which also include vocational guidance, health services, and specialized education. Aspects which are being investigated are:

- \* philosophy of librarianship and information work
- \* governance
- \* distribution of library services
- \* selection and censorship
- \* training of librarians and information workers
- \* resource sharing and networking.

An additional group will also be formed in order to indicate what the alternative options will cost. This aspect is important, because different scenarios could contain interesting suggestions. For example, Verbeek (1992) submitted a scenario to NEPI which proposes a new library and information infrastructure for South Africa. One wonders, however, what it would cost to implement, and who will pay for it? Thus the financial feasibility of the various alternatives must be determined.

It seems that some matters on which consensus are likely to be reached are that there should be greater utilization of existing facilities and resources with more cooperation between school and public libraries. The joint school/community library, as found in parts of Australia and elsewhere, could also offer an alternative solution, especially in rural areas and for secondary schools. Dwyer (1989:169) found that these libraries "are generally more suited to secondary than to primary schools."

There appears to be a general acceptance that the problems which are being faced in the field of print and audiovisual media provision are so many and complex that they will be very difficult to solve. We do not want existing school libraries disappearing, or collections becoming out-dated because no new materials are ever added to them, as has happened elsewhere in Africa (Kakoma 1991:3; Mukuvi 1990:46; Ojiambo 1988:148; Osei-Bonsu 1990:88, 95-96; Tawete 1991:126). All concerned with the necessity of children having access to books and other media must cooperate to find solutions so that we can build and improve on what is available. Moulder (1991:9)

has suggested that school and public libraries could establish interest groups to encourage pupils to become regular library users. Such groups are more likely to be successful if many members of the community are involved, not just teachers and librarians.

Librarians and educationalists need to devise ways to share resources, such as having mobile libraries for rural areas or regional centers with one set of expensive audiovisual media which can be rotated to schools for use by classroom teachers. However, there is little point in having books and media available in all the schools if the majority of the teachers do not know how to use these materials effectively. As Mchombu (1991:34) points out relevant training, whether it is initial library training or part of continuing education should be doing at least two things: "First, suffusing the entire program with a consciousness of the African information environment as the foundation on which present libraries are created. Second, develop an in-depth knowledge of specialization to include repackaging of information, indigenous knowledge resources, and development librarianship."

In South Africa, just as in other parts of Africa, it will be necessary to study the local conditions and environment. The many problems outlined earlier in the paper such as poverty, illiteracy and the oral tradition must constantly be borne in mind. In all likelihood, it will be necessary to develop innovative methods of training. One suggestion is that there must be greater diversification in the training courses offered. A greater variety of short, but intensive and specialized courses should be held. It will also be necessary to develop innovative training materials which will address the particular circumstances of this area. The audiovisual materials which have already been developed by READ are examples of what can be done in this field.

In conclusion, we can say that physical access to books and other media is seen as only half of the solution to the problem in a developing country. What is more important, and what must receive urgent attention in any national policy for school libraries and media centers, is the large scale education of all segments of the population. Education is needed for the parents and other caregivers of small children on the important role which language and also reading play in their development and education. Subject teachers need education, both during their initial

training and by means of in-service training, on the use and value of books and other media for information and knowledge in the teaching/learning situation in their classes. Media teachers also require adequate education and training.

It is only by educating and involving all members of the community in library utilization that we will have libraries that are fully-utilized. Only then will all the children have both physical and intellectual access to books and other media in South Africa in the 21st century.

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### Number of times pupils visited media centre in matric year

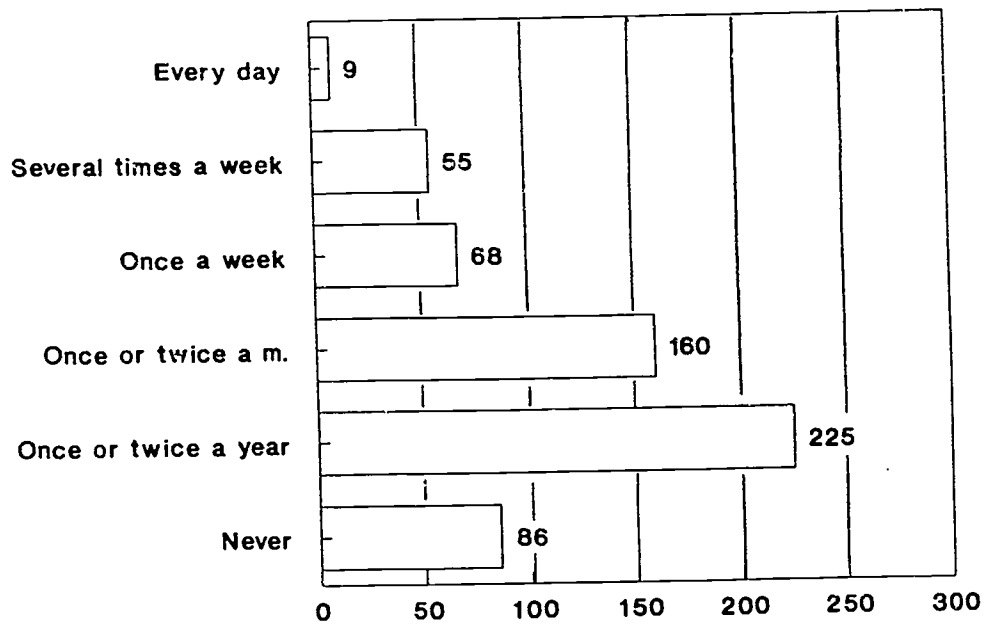


Figure 1

### Number of books pupils read in matric year

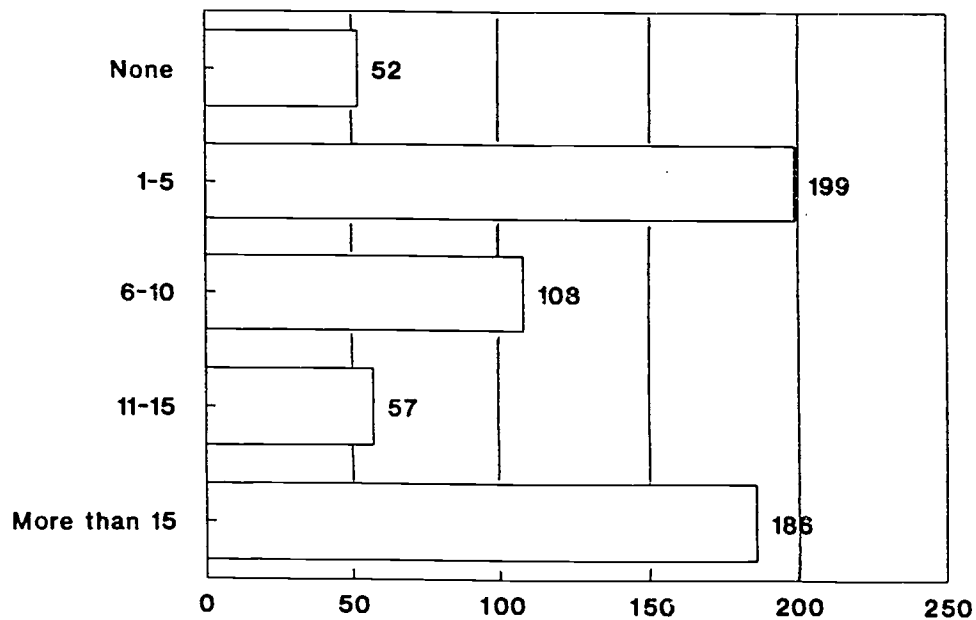


Figure 2

### Subject teachers accompanying class to media centre

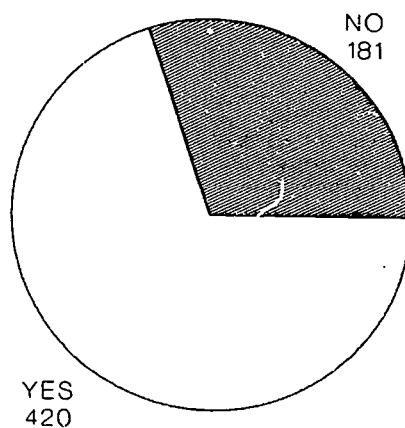


Figure 3

### Subject teachers' classroom use of audiovisual media

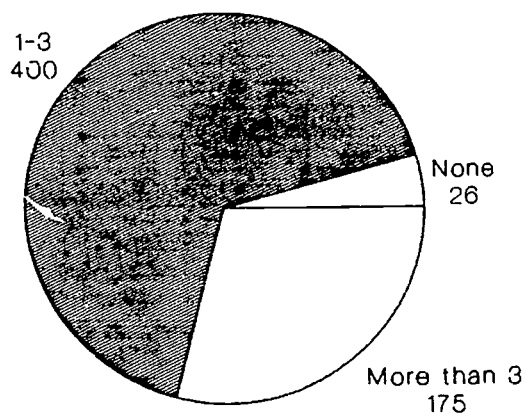


Figure 4

### Number of times subject teachers suggested pupils use media centre

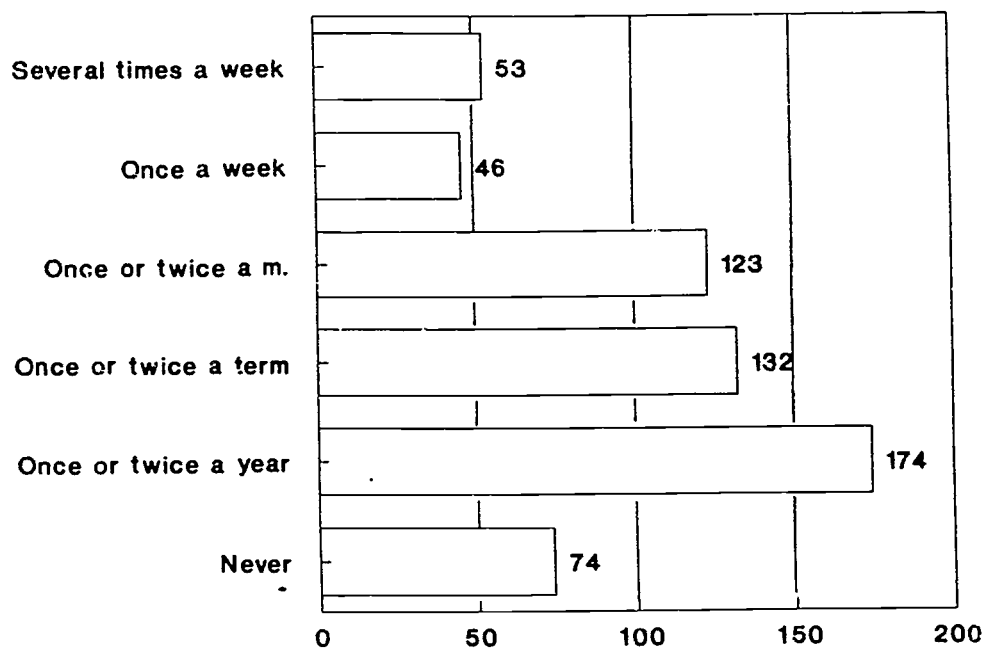


Figure 5

### Usefulness of user guidance periods

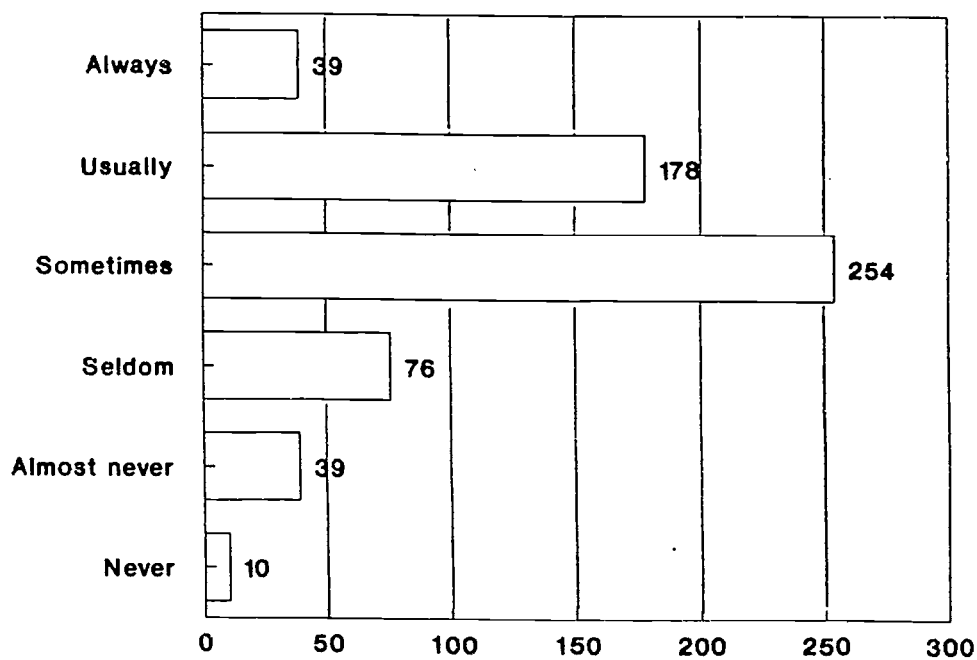


Figure 6

### Friendly atmosphere in the primary school media centre

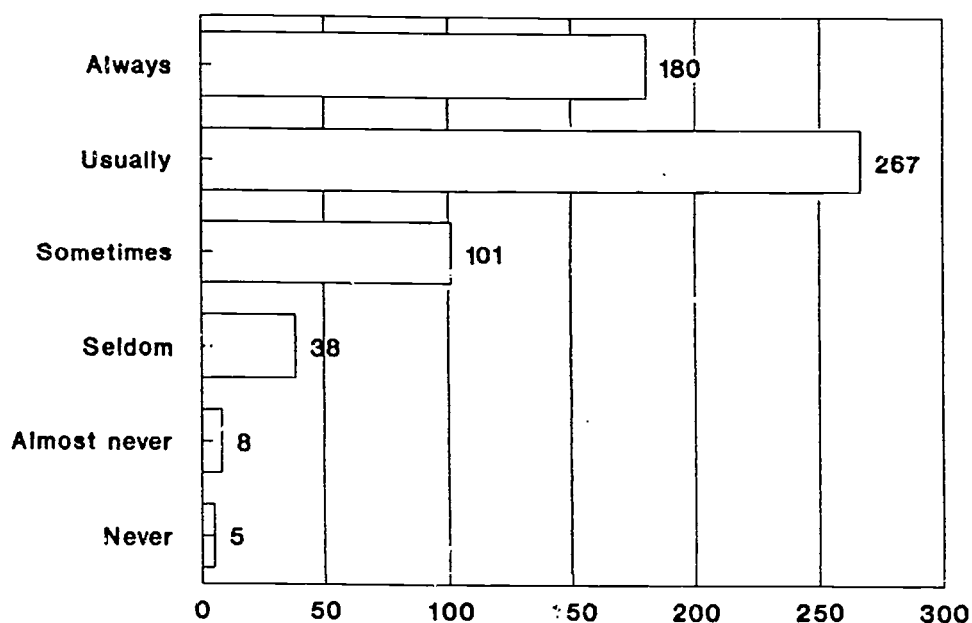


Figure 7

### Friendly atmosphere in the secondary school media centre

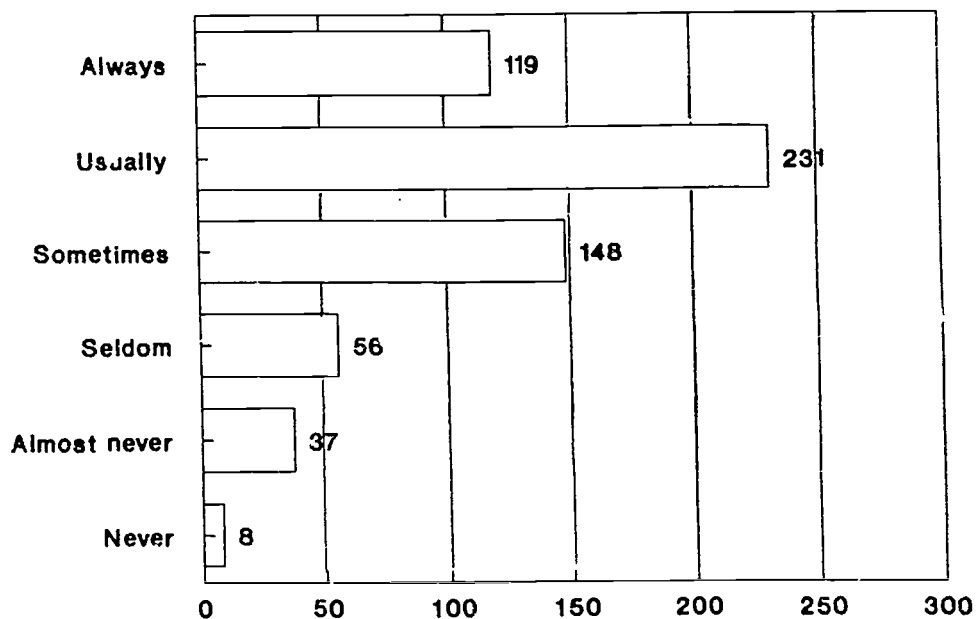


Figure 8

### Contribution of media centre use to pupils' exam success

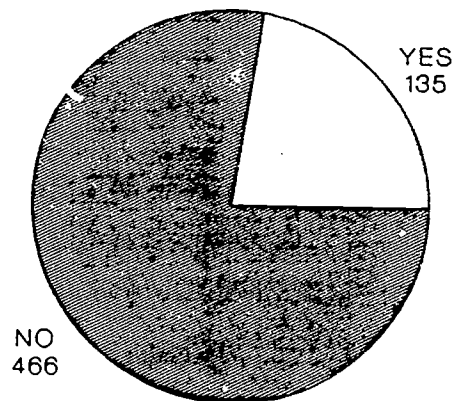


Figure 9

### Contribution of media centre use to pupils' personal development

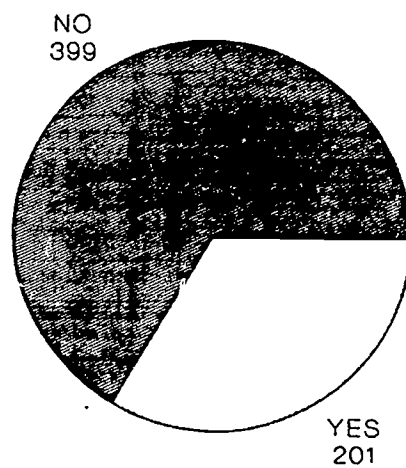


Figure 10

## APPENDIX 1

### The Dishonest Visitors\*

I want to tell a story!  
Tell it!  
I want to tell a story!  
Tell it!  
Now, a certain man who had a wife  
Had to set out on a journey with their son.  
They faced a long journey.  
He then set out on that journey with his son.  
And so they left.  
Their destination was far off.  
They trudged on until sunset.  
Now, when the sun had set, they looked for a  
place to sleep.  
They came across a certain village  
And asked for a place to sleep.  
They were well received.  
They were shown great hospitality.  
The villagers gave them food to eat  
And prepared a place for them to sleep.  
There was a hut used as a kitchen.  
This hut was neatly kept;  
Its floor was freshly smeared with cow-dung.  
In this kitchen  
A supply of fire-wood was always kept  
And water also.  
Everything necessary was stored there.  
Cooking pots were also kept there.  
The kitchen was neat in every respect.  
Fowls too were kept in that hut.  
That is where the visitors were expected to  
sleep.  
There was a hen in that hut  
Which had laid some eggs  
And was sitting on them.  
When the visitors had put down their  
belongings,  
They passed the time for a short while with  
their hosts.  
Then they became tired  
And said: "We would like to go to sleep."  
"Indeed it is very proper," their hosts replied,  
And showed them the place to sleep.  
They gave them a lamp  
So that they could see while they prepared to  
sleep.  
They also gave them matches in case the lamp  
went out.  
Then they left them, and they went to sleep.  
Yet these visitors were thieves  
And they had in mind that hen  
Which was sitting on its eggs.

Now, in the middle of the night  
They took the fire-wood  
And made fire in the hut.  
They then took a cooking pot  
And poured water into it  
And boiled it.  
They got hold of that hen  
And killed it.  
They used the boiling water to remove the  
feathers from the fowl.  
They dressed it properly  
And put it into the cooking pot.  
The pot boiled.  
Time went on and day was beginning to dawn.  
They also took the eggs and put them into the  
pot.  
Now, early in the morning,  
The fowl was not yet quite cooked.  
The head of the family woke up  
And opened the door of his hut.  
Now, when he had opened the door,  
He went to the open courtyard  
Where they make fire.  
He lit his fire  
And warmed himself at it.  
Now, when they noticed that the head of the  
family was up,  
The father of the boy went out  
And left his child looking after the pot.  
Now, he went out  
To keep the head of the family busy outside.  
They whiled away the time by talking.  
"How did you sleep, visitors?"  
"Oh, we slept well!  
There was no trouble.  
It is just that the young man is still asleep  
Because he was very tired."  
"Oh yes, it is quite understandable."  
The talk continued in that strain.  
Now, when the hen was cooked.  
The dawn had come  
And they could see the way.  
When the chicken was well-cooked  
The boy thought of how he could tell his father  
that the chicken  
was ready.  
He then went out of the hut  
And stood at the door  
Saying: "you, father,  
What will it help us to stay here any longer?"

Now, it is far to at-the-chicken-is-cooked, the  
place where we are  
going. When, then, shall we arrive there?"  
His father replied: "What has gone into your  
head boy?  
Are you mad, what has possessed you?

Do you think that at drink-the-gravy-and-take-  
the-fowl-and-put-it-  
into-the-provision-basket is as far as where we  
are going to at  
the-fowl-is-cooked?  
Why, it is near here!"  
The boy got the message that his father wanted  
him to drink the  
gravy and then take the fowl and put it into the  
provision basket.  
So he went back into the hut and drank the  
gravy.

He finished it,  
Then took the fowl and the eggs  
And put them into the basket.  
He then came out of the hut and said: "Well,  
father,  
everything is ready.  
I have packed all our belongings!"  
"That is good, my son, that is what I wished.  
Let us now go!"

They went into the hut and got their belongings  
And then set out on their journey.  
They went on for a long time.  
Then the housewife of the village where they  
had spent the night  
Decided to go into the kitchen  
To arrange the hut since the visitors had slept  
there.

When she entered  
She was met by the smell of a cooked chicken.  
"Now, what has happened?  
The cooking pot is greasy  
And it is also obvious that a fire was made  
here!"  
Uttering a cry of surprise, she said: "Oh, no!  
Alas! The hen is no longer here.  
The eggs also are gone!  
How did this happen?  
I am sure this is the work of our visitors. They  
are thieves!"  
This means that  
Those who give others a helping hand,  
Will themselves be left in the lurch.

This is the end of the tale.

\*(Baumbach & Marivate 1973)

## Opening Shutters and Letting in the Light? Contemporary Irish Writing for Children

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About eighteen months ago, Fintan O'Toole had a column in *The Irish Times* entitled "Everybody's Doing It" in which he referred to the new "outburst of (local) novel writing" which he added, "looks less like a no warning explosion and more like another aspect of the restlessness of modern Ireland in which the novel is just one of the many forms in which the place can be approached." What he didn't add was that all this new activity in *adult* writing can be matched by a new series of developments in writing for the young, and more slowly perhaps, in attitudes to that writing.

Key moments in that development would include the readiness of a number of local publishers, The Children's Press, O'Brien Press, and Poolbeg Press among others, to publish children's books with as time went on, an increasing emphasis on high production values; and the appearance of a number of authors whose books attained popular and critical success. Clearly, views of the precise literary merits of their work will to some extent always be subjective, but there are at least some such books of which I think we do not have to be embarrassed. These would include: Tom McCaughren's wild life trilogy, to which he has recently added *Return to the Ark*; Pat O'Shea's *The Hounds of the Morrigan*; several of Catherine Sefton's; i.e. Martin Waddell's titles, and certainly his (her) *The Beat of the Drum* (As Waddell, of course, he has earned universal recognition for his picture storybooks for the youngest readers.); Cormac MacRaois' three titles *The Battle Below Giltspur*, *Dance of the Midnight Fire*, and more recently, what I think is the best of the three, *Lightning Over Giltspur*; Sebastian Barry's *Elsewhere* (In my opinion, the most under-rated of modern Irish children's fiction); Terry Hasset Henry's mischievously witty *The Witch Who Couldn't*; John Quinn's *The Summer of Lily and Esme* (a superbly evocative and nostalgic picture of childhood, in which youth and age, present and past, are skillfully woven in a beautifully paced narrative of one of those long gone summers); some very

good work in the genre of historical fiction from among others, Michael Mullen (particularly, I think, his early title *Sea Wolves from the North*), Morgan Llywelyn (with her *Brian Boru*) and, perhaps best of these, Marita Conlon-McKenna's two *Famine* stories, *Under the Hawthorn Tree* and its recent sequel, the absolutely excellent *Wildflower Girl*; in the Irish language there has been the widely praised Marie Louise Fitzpatrick's *An Canal*; and from the same writer/illustrator, though this time in English, an enchanting picture storybook *The Sleeping Giant*. It's by no means an inconsiderable body of work.

It is not, of course, the case that there were no such things as Irish children's books until this recent flourishing. When their history comes to be written, they will be seen to have a tradition going back some three hundred years. We can claim a few household names, starting with Jonathan Swift (If we allow *Gulliver's Travels* as a children's book, though even if we don't we can certainly claim, by its creation of imaginary and miniature worlds, a most significant influence on later children's literature.). We can recall Maria Edgeworth and her moral tales of the early nineteenth century; we can even ask, "Who reads them nowadays?" of writers such as Thomas Mayne Reid, the nineteenth century writer from County Down, specialist in boys' adventure stories based mainly on his own colorful life and travels; and what about one hundred or so novels, principally for young ladies, of Bandon-born L. T. Meade whose school stories reflect a privileged middle-class British world of the time, the mid to late nineteenth century? We could mention also Standish O'Grady (1846-1928), one of the first writers to draw on Irish myth and legend for children's fiction, and later, Padraic Colum (1881-1972), again drawing on traditional tales plus memories of his own childhood for a book such as his 1913 story *A Boy in Eirinn*.

In spite of these names from the past, it remains true that relative to the children's literature of some other countries, the Irish

dimension is a limited one. The reasons for this make for fascinating speculation and I want to raise some of these with you.

Seven years ago (July 1985), Dr. John Coolahan, now Professor of Education at Maynooth, gave a most thought-provoking paper to the Reading Association of Ireland. Its title was "Fear of the Imagination: Roots of the Tradition" and his argument in essence was that the Irish educational system in choosing its reading material for use in schools has from the nineteenth century onwards always been strongly influenced by the Utilitarian theorists of education as distinct from those of the Romantic persuasion; he argues that this has had a profound and lasting effect on general schooling. I quote his final sentence, "The neglect of the imagination in much of the reading experience of children in the nineteenth century was such a distortion, and generations of children were the losers to an extent that it is difficult to calculate."

Now, I would add to this by arguing that this focus on the notion of reading as largely a functional process for functional ends has resulted as a side effect in a very limited output of Irish writing for children, in low standards of attainment in what has been produced, and in virtually a total absence of any serious critical attention to it. My phrase is deliberately *Irish writing for children* because Irish writing for adolescents is an even rarer species. That is why, in the various circulars that appeared from the Republic of Ireland's Department of Education about the new Junior Certificate English which all our secondary school students will be taking at the end of their third year in secondary school from 1992 onwards, I was particularly drawn to a statement which specifically states that one of the aims of this new program is to "recognize the validity of adolescent experience." It strikes me that for Irish society as a whole and not just the educational wing of it, this new recognition would be a genuinely radical step and would involve much more than merely changing what fourteen-year-olds read in school.

But here, in the literary domain, we come to an amazing paradox. Irish literature is replete with fiction which deals with childhood and adolescence: but this is *adult* literature. We have these fictions at every rung in a literary hierarchy, from, say Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, to the novels of people as diverse as John McGahern or Edna O'Brien or Desmond Hogan or Jennifer Johnston

or Bernard MacLaverty, not to mention the short stories of people such as Frank O'Connor or Brian Friel, not to mention the popular fiction of someone like Maeve Binchy. All national literatures have, of course, their adolescent fictions, but with Ireland's writers this would seem to be an obsession as if childhood were some sort of unfinished business which, even for adults, can never be quite resolved. Indeed, it is perfectly possible with that phrase about the *validity of adolescent experience* still in mind to see many of the works by writers I have just named as angry outbursts at the lack of any such validity. Read McGahern's *The Dark*, for example, and you will hear an anguished scream at the absence of childhood/adolescent recognition, and isn't that title, *The Dark*, so significant? So many Irish writers have long been drawn to the dark as a metaphor for their psychological and emotional self-examination, particularly for the hidden recesses of their distant childhoods and more generally for their confrontation with what Sean Lucy has called in one of his O'Riada poems "Our Deadly Lasting Sadness." At the time of the publication of his recent volume of poems, *Seeing Things*, Seamus Heaney is quoted in a *Sunday Tribune* interview as saying, "I think that children are extremely unhappy. One of the blessings of getting older, thanks be to God, is that you can say, 'No', or 'Why?' I don't mean in any aggressive way. You don't suffer agonies in the same way. You suffer genuine agony of reality, but not the terrible fears and sorrows," and later he admits, "I would say I was more unhappy between the ages of nine and nineteen than I ever needed or wanted to be again."

Now, many of the writers' works I have just referred to could certainly be read by our older adolescents and to varying degrees appreciated, but they are not *adolescent* in the sense that this term is being used in a talk such as this. There is, however, in one of them a stunning demonstration of what precisely the difference is between these two kinds of fiction. You will recall that one of the most searing moments in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist* occurs when Stephen, then about sixteen, has his first sexual experience with the prostitute. This leads to others; then he is exposed to Father Arnall's celebrated *hellfire* sermon. He undergoes spasms of remorse and guilt; he sees, as Joyce writes, "the hell reserved for his sins"; he plunges into a prayer for forgiveness and, says Joyce, "His eyes were dimmed with tears, and, looking humbly up to heaven, he wept for

the innocence he had lost." Now, no adolescent book I know has a sentence like that in it, nor could it, perhaps, because Stephen is filtering both through the eyes of an older man, and Joyce is filtering both through those of an even older one. The concern is not with *now* which is the concern with much *adolescent* fiction. The concern is with growth and developing understanding, with emotion recollected--and not always in tranquility.

I would finally in this context just like to mention a much more recent Irish work than Joyce's which is saturated with the adolescent experience and which not only *validates* it but, I would argue, dignifies and ennobles it. But, again, this is an adult book, this volume of short stories, *Night in Tunisia* published by Neil Jordan in 1976 when he was just twenty five. The title story set in a hot 1950's summer on the north Dublin beaches is the most poetic treatment I know in Irish writing of that aspect of adolescence which the poet John Keats had in mind when he writes in a letter to his brother George about the poisonous time between being a boy and being a man. Listen to this opening paragraph:

That year they took the greenhouse again. She was there again, older than him and a lot more venal. He saw her on the white chairs that faced the tennis court and again in the burrows behind the tennis court and again still down on the fifteenth hole where the golf course met the mouth of the Boyne. It was twilight each time he saw her and the peculiar light seemed to suspend her for an infinity, a suspended infinite silence, full of years somehow. She must have been seventeen now that he was fourteen. She was fatter, something of an exhausted woman about her and still something of the girl whom adults call mindless. It was as if a cigarette between her fingers had burned toward the tips without her noticing. He heard people talking about her even on her first day there. He learned that underneath her frayed blouse her wrists were marked. She was a girl about whom they would talk anyway since she lived with a father who drank, who was away for long stretches in England. Since she lived in a green corrugated-iron house. Not even a house, a chalet really, like the ones the townspeople built to house summer visitors. But she lived in it all the year round.

*That* is adolescence, but it is seen through very adult eyes, and it would be a very perceptive fourteen-year-old who would grasp even a fraction of what is going on in that paragraph alone.

An now, to *children's fiction*, Irish style. Where to start? Let's start with the confusion which, I fear, clouds many of the issues. There was a handsome volume from The O'Brien Press in 1984. Four eminent editors, a skillful illustrator and an eye-catching title, *The Lucky Bag*, subtitled *Classic Irish Children's Stories*. Let's look at the authors Mary Lavin, Seamus MacManus, Jonathan Swift, Sean O'Faolain, Padraic O'Conaire, Michael MacLiammoir, Frank O'Connor, James Plunkett, James Stephens, and Brian Friel. Let's look at the introduction written by one of the editors, Eilís Dillon, "A good many of our stories," she says, "were not written specially for children at all but, like *Gulliver's Travels*, can be read by everyone." Ah! Now, I hope it wouldn't be too smart-alecky to suggest that there is something slightly Irish about calling a book *Classic Irish Children's Stories* and then including the sentence I've just read from the introduction. It doesn't matter, of course, to the children. Let them read and never mind where the stories come from as long as adults, we don't think there is some deep well of Irish *children's* fiction being drawn on.

It was probably an awareness of this which caused Clodagh Corcoran, when compiling her 1988 anthology *Discoveries* to commission fourteen new stories from a number of contemporary writers for the young such as Michael Mullen, Eilís Dillon, Tom McCaughren and Carolyn Swift. The book's title provides the best indication of its thematic range. Each item, whatever its setting, provides the young reader (and this would include the young adolescent reader) with an opportunity to share imaginatively in an experience which creates in D. H. Lawrence's phrase, "a slit in the umbrella." Particularly welcome, I thought, was the editor's decision to balance the more usual stories derived from Irish legend with stories which have a strong contemporary feel. Of these, the most haunting is Michael Mullen's *The Labyrinth* which conveys convincingly and touchingly the depressed world of a Dublin housing estate where the children of the family depicted "pull the curtains upon their own poverty and fear." *There* is a new note in Irish children's fiction, another kind of validation of experience. I am delighted that Michael Mullen has subsequently extended his short story into a full-length novel *The Caravan*. It is, however, a slight disappointment that Clodagh Corcoran's follow up anthology in 1989, *Baker's Dozen*, aimed specifically at the young adult

market, did not fulfill the expectations raised by *Discoveries*. In spite of a distinguished list of contributors, the volume suffers from a confused sense of its audience and seems slightly scared to meet them head on. There is too much self-consciousness, too much a sense of setting a toe too cautiously into possibly murky waters.

I'm glad to say, however, that no such caution characterizes three of our most recent adolescent books, all of which have appeared within the past few months. These are Vincent Banville's *Hennessy*, a raw, irreverent, and above all, a very contemporary fifteen-year-old Dublin schoolboy determined to make his way in a world of school, rock, girls, and crazy adults--not to mention the parrot you can see on the cover. In Mike Scott's *Judith and the Traveller*, we meet fifteen-year-old Judith who following her mother's death and her father's remarriage is sufficiently unhappy to run away from her privileged home. Her travels take her to a Dublin she does not know peopled mainly by the unsympathetic except for the handsome Spider with whom she embarks on a journey of many discoveries, personal and social. Most interesting of all, perhaps, is that it is the nearest Irish version so far of what is usually meant by teenage fiction in the British or American sense. In Margrit Cruickshank's *Circling the Triangle*, we watch young Stephen Russell, his Leaving Certificate on the horizon, go through in a South Dublin setting the various personal, social, familial, and sexual strains popularly associated with the adolescent period, and all, I may say, with a candor which even three or four years ago would have been unthinkable in a book from an Irish children's publisher.

I've mentioned the name of Eilís Dillon as one of the editors of *The Lucky Bag* and I now want to look at her wider contribution to Irish children's writing. With two other writers, Patricia Lynch and Walter Macken, she could be said to have constituted for many years whatever Irish writing for the young we had, certainly in the Republic of Ireland. Two years ago she made a triumphant return to the children's lists with her novel *The Island of Ghosts* following the success of which a number of her earlier books are now being reissued. Some of these are clearly for the younger child, but her best ones, I think, straddle the gap between the child and the adolescent. Interestingly, her contribution to *The Lucky Bag*, a short story called "Bad Blood," gets, even in its title, to the heart of her favorite themes

which have to do with familial disagreements and squabbles but always, with ultimate truces. Her favorite setting is our west coast ravished by wild weather and by centuries of enforced emigration and she has a particular fondness for demonstrating the corroding effects of suspicion and mistrust even where they have long since become part of history. Her book *The Island of Horses*, for example, deals with a rebellion of 1795 in which a priest is supposedly betrayed; 150 years on, this still provokes acrimony between the inhabitants of different islands. Her heroes are usually boys in their early teens, just reaching out to manhood. Of her short story in *The Lucky Bag* she writes, "It shows boys on the edge of being grown up and learning to handle the good and bad aspects of being a man." Exactly, for the adventures, often on the wild western seas in which her boys indulge, provide opportunities to taste adult life, and very important this to witness its conflicts and its fecklessness. Some of the older adults, men and women, are particularly memorable creations rather in the manner of say Maurya in Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. In *The Island of Horses*, it's Mrs. Conroy embarking on her pilgrimage to the now derelict island where she was born. The same motif of the quest dominates one of her recently reissued books, *The Lost Island*, though here the quest is in the heart of soul of its fourteen-year-old hero, Michael Farrell, as he embarks not only on the search for a lost island but a lost father as well. Listen to its opening quiet, reflective paragraph and with the opening of *Night in Tunisia* still in mind consider how, even at fourteen, there are so many ways of contemplating the world:

This adventure really began one early spring morning when I was fourteen years old. I remember it all so clearly, from the moment when I stepped out onto the still dark yard and went to unlock the stable door. The pony whinnied very quietly and stirred his feet in the straw of his bed. I remember looking up at the stars. Soon a soft light would come from the east, so gently that it would hardly be noticed at first. Then the birds would stir, and suddenly it would be day and the stars gone. I had always loved these early mornings when the pony and I travelled along in warm companionship to the Saturday market in the town.

I really do think very highly of Dillon's work and it was a particular pleasure recently to welcome her back to the children's lists, as I've already mentioned, with her novel *The Island of Ghosts*.

For the first seven chapters we follow events through the eyes of twelve-year-old Dara Flaherty. He with his best friend, Brendan, is shortly to leave Inishglass to pursue an education on the mainland, well aware that this will probably be the first step in a permanent exile, but for six months or so the move has to be delayed since Dara and Brendan are in effect kidnapped by the very person whose tuition has made their continuing education possible. The unfolding of the relationship between the boys and their captor, Bardal, is fascinatingly portrayed. It is the principal means through which the writer raises the novel's moral issues, the most significant of which has to do with the disparity between mere schooling and real knowledge.

I would have to be much less complimentary about the altogether more whimsical world of Patricia Lynch. Since in any case, her books are largely out of print, I can move on to the third of this particular trio, Walter Macken. He has only two books specifically for the young, *Island of the Great Yellow Ox* and, I think, the much better *The Flight of the Doves*, again a book on the popular quest theme as young Finn and Fergal make their way across Ireland on the run from a cruel stepfather to find a sympathetic granny. There are all sorts of *adult* themes dealt with here, but principally the thin dividing line which sometimes exists between villainy and good. It is essentially a book about the deception of appearance and about the merits and demerits of a rational as distinct from an instinctive response to life.

Macken, Lynch, and Dillon are the principal contributors to the genre of writing for children usually called the adventure story, a genre which nowadays in children's fiction in Britain or America, has largely been overtaken by fiction concentrating either on social realism or on fantasy, particularly fantasy employing the device known as the time slip, the mechanism whereby children of the present day can in fantasy become involved in past events, whether as witnesses or participants. To a lesser extent, and more slowly, this has happened in Ireland also with local and sometimes very idiosyncratic variations. Before touching on some of these I want to mention a book which in some ways combines elements of the adventure story with some of the newer touches. This, you may recall, is my nomination for the most underrated of contemporary Irish children's books, Sebastian Barry's *Elsewhere: the Adventures of Belemus* from Dolmen Press.

The Dublin hero of *Elsewhere*, the quaintly-named Belemus Duck, reviews at the age of thirteen, eleven experiences from the previous year, each occupying a self-contained chapter and each relating an excursion into a different fantasy world. Admittedly, the episodic structure this imposes on the book is a weakness since it rules out any notion of growth within Belemus. It does, though, make the book an excellent choice for reading aloud. More importantly, the eleven individual journeys provide a picturesque and frequently picaresque gallery of characters and events. They range widely across time and space, but all are described in a mischievously witty style with occasional parodic echoes of among others Stevenson, Dickens, and yes, Joyce. Best of all is Chapter Eight in which Belemus following in at least some of Leopold Bloom's footsteps encounters the diversity and eccentricity of Dublin life.

A further example of the adventure story with, for Ireland at any rate, some new touches is Hugh Galt's novel *Bike Hunt*, from The O'Brien Press in 1988 which the blurb suggests is "a thrilling new story for ten to fourteen-year-olds" and which has as its central hero, Niall, a thirteen-year-old. The story itself summed up rather unpromisingly on the blurb as "a story of thieves and kidnappers" has an attractive Wicklow setting and just about remains within the realm of credibility. The most interesting thing by far, certainly for an Irish children's book, is the recognition of the young people's growing sexual awareness, a theme given quite humorous and sympathetic expression in the description of the relationship between Niall and his very clever friend Katy. Here, from an early moment in the story, is one of Katy's dreams.

And then one night came the weird dream. She had dreamt she was on a sea-fishing trip with her dad on the rocky coast of west Clare where they often went on holiday. They were fishing off a rocky ledge into a deep swell when Katy hooked an enormous silver fish that threshed and twisted in the foam. The fish was so strong she felt afraid she was going to be pulled in so she shouted to her dad to help her. But it wasn't her dad who came, it was Niall. He put his arms round her and they both pulled and pulled and pulled against the battling fish until...the line snapped and they both fell over in a tangle. At first they were dazed, but then they started laughing and Niall leant forward to kiss her.

That is real Clare country: Dr. Anthony Clare country, I mean.

The local and idiosyncratic variations I mentioned a moment ago are best seen in those Irish children's books which belong to the fantasy genre. The local element derives from the fact that most of these have their basis in the very rich world of Irish myth. There have, of course, been numerous re-tellings of selected stories from this, particularly from the cycle of tales revolving around Cuchulainn and all, naturally, suitably censored. Our epic tales are clearly, extremely significant. They are the repositories of our longest memories, and they reveal, often in a most striking and starkly dramatic form, philosophical and psychological truths about us; they encapsulate the earliest insights into those characteristics which help to make us what we are. Looked at from this point of view, something like the great Irish epic *The Tain* has an even more immediate relevance to the dying years of the twentieth century than might initially be thought. Its depiction of an essentially violent world, ravaged by betrayal, infidelities, and futile carnage, has many contemporary resonances, not least in the land of its origin. It seems to me vital that our children should have the opportunity to become acquainted with these stories, certainly as part of their educational development which is why I welcome the re-telling, especially for the young, of *The Tain* by Liam MacUistain from the O'Brien Press which deals very tellingly, given its target audience, with all these sides of our own dark.

In the re-telling of these stories, there is one approach to Irish myth in books for the young, but another approach is that whereby Irish writers for children draw on some aspects of this early material as a basis for their own fantasy fiction, generally starting with real twentieth century children being sucked into earlier and wilder worlds. If this is to work completely satisfactorily, it seems to me that two conditions must be fulfilled. The *real* children must be *real* children developed in some psychological depth, capable of shouldering the responsibilities imposed on them in their fantasy worlds. If, in addition, the children can be vigorous participants in a process of self-enlightenment rather than merely witnesses of events, this is a bonus. The second condition is that the fantasy dimension must have its own credibility, not of course the credibility of real life, whatever that is, but its intrinsic, developmental likelihood.

There are two contemporary Irish children's writers who in different ways manage to attain both requirements. One of these is Pat O'Shea and her *The Hounds of the Morrigan*, a marvelous if lengthy, book. It is full of some quite zany passages, particularly those featuring its two witches. But, of course, witchcraft, magic, miracles, the alchemy by which the ordinary and safe become the extraordinary and the threatening--and the book is about all of these--have their darker side too. Here, for example, are our two heroes, ten-year-old Pidge and young sister Brigit, in one of the many storms which pepper their quiet Connemara world:

As they ran, the darkness came down like a thick quilt of sorrow and the thunder exploded across the sky and sounded as if it were overthrowing temples and ethics and crashing them down like sixpenny plates. Lightning darted and streaked in long, crooked daggers of white fire; a knife-throwing act of some mad and wicked God.

"Overthrowing temples and ethics;" "some mad and wicked God"--we deal here, in other words, with the eternal conflict between good and evil, but here given such concrete representation as to make the struggle live for the young reader, and with an outcome that is not always certain. The ending by which I mean the last few lines is magnificent in its simplicity:

Last of all were the rainbows. From that time out, they always saw lots of rainbows; and occasionally when they were with other people, there would be one. If it were particularly magnificent, they would cry out, "Look! There's a rainbow," and the other people would say, "Where? Where? And the children would be surprised.

I suspect that when Stephen Dedalus cried for his lost innocence, he knew the rainbows had begun to lose their brightness.

Cormac MacRaois's 1988 novel, *The Battle Below Giltspur*, and its sequels *Dance of the Midnight Fire* and the more recent *Lightning Over Giltspur* make excellent companions to O'Shea's book although the scale of activity is a smaller one. Again, Irish myth and legend are used as powerful starting points for stories which in spite of a beautifully observed modern setting bristle with resonances of the ancient past. On the magical night of Bealtaine in the first book the forces of good and evil beneath this tranquil scenery are unleashed. The

outcome is a series of increasingly frightening challenges for young Niamh and Daire challenges in which they are assisted by the revived Glasan and his friend the scarecrow. Perhaps because these books are tighter than O'Shea's and because there is less immediate and less obvious humor, the violence seems more intense. Certainly, the climactic battle in *The Battle Below Giltspur* provides a final chapter of real tingling excitement. The same note is struck in many of the accounts of the machinations of the protean Morrigan in the most recent title. What the books share with O'Shea's are a complete lack of pietism and an utter refusal to shout messages. MacRaois achieves this by creating characters, real and supernatural, who move beyond allegory into forceful credibility. In the concluding paragraph of the new book MacRaois writes of his three young protagonists, "Naimh, Daire, and Rónán eventually grew up, as all children do." A sentence which, for the young reader, is a reminder that there is a world beyond the fantasy with which he or she will soon have to cope.

As you might imagine from someone with an accent such as mine, I have a particular interest in the proliferation of young people's books generated by the so-called *troubles* of the past twenty years in Northern Ireland. As I begin reading yet another of these, I must admit to seeing what the Ulster novelist Brian Moore meant when he once said, "If there is anything more depressing than Ulster fact, it must be Ulster fiction." Such books have, in fact, been with us for a very long time. Listen to this:

My dear Lads: the subject of Ireland is one which has for some years been a very prominent one, and is likely, I fear, for some time yet to occupy a large share of public attention...The discontent manifested in the troubles of recent years has had its root in an older sense of grievance, for which there was, unhappily, only too abundant reason.

That, believe it or not, is part of the introduction to a children's book first published in 1888, 103 years ago, and dealing with events of precisely two hundred years earlier, 1688. The book is *Orange and Green* by the Victorian boys' writer, G. A. Henty. Since the vigorous Mr. Henty there have been many others, especially, as I say, in the past twenty years. I think I could claim to have read all of these recent ones, and it seems to me that only three stand out as

having anything genuinely illuminating to say to a young reader about the tragic situation in the North. These would be Peter Carter's *Under Goliath*, Catherine Sefton's *The Beat of the Drum* (though some of her other titles like, *The Sleepers on the Hill* and her most recent *Along a Lonely Road* where the *troubles* are on the periphery of the events described are excellent too), and best of all in my opinion, a book which strictly speaking is not fiction but an autobiography. This is Finola Sumner's *Double the Boys* which describes the author's upbringing as one of a Catholic family of nine in an Ulster which spans the late 1940s to the period when, as she says in the penultimate chapter, "the storm clouds were gathering, the political scene having all but arrived." It is a warm, witty, compassionate account of an upbringing with which, as someone whose childhood/adolescence spanned a virtually identical period, I can fully identify while having seen it all from as we say up here "another tradition."

I began by referring to the paucity, or relative paucity, of Irish books specifically written for children, and in particular, for adolescents. But it seems almost inevitable, however, that as part of the current boom in Irish publishing for children we shall eventually have many more. I have already referred to some of the most recent of these in the adolescent genre, but my own favorite of current contributions to this particular area comes from Attic Press which recently introduced a series called *Bright Sparks* with two specially commissioned books aimed at the teenage market. I feel, though, that their startlingly different approaches and assumptions have something, almost parable like, to tell us about contemporary Irish writing for the young.

They are attractively produced and look like what one might call the real thing. Inside, however, it is very different story, or more exactly, two very different stories. What they have in common, though, is perhaps even more instructive than what separates them. For neither of the writers is willing to grapple head on with contemporary teenage life as experienced in Ireland. There's still some sort of denial at work here, some reluctance, perhaps, to validate. What we are offered instead in Mary Rose Callaghan's *Has Anyone Seen Heather?* is a story that, if anything, is too contemporary but one which takes place exclusively in London where the two Irish sisters on the cover have gone in search of their wayward mother. It's a curious book in that

one almost feels it has been written on the assumption that the teenage novel must offer one, at least, of almost everything that might just yesterday have been considered taboo. Thus, there is one wife-batterer, one gay male, one bisexual male, one rapist, one gentleman who exposes himself, one four letter word (yes, that one), and one student with the sort of literary bent that allows him to move from Sartre via Heidegger to talking of measuring out his life in coffee spoons. It is not a book guaranteed to inspire any confidence in the male sex, nor I imagine to endear any skeptics to the cause of teenage fiction.

*Daisy Chain War* by Joan O'Neill is, however, a very different matter and is a book I recommend without reservation as one of the best Irish-published books for the young for quite some time. The setting is a Dun Laoghaire dominated by the comings and goings of a boat which, in alternately separating and uniting various members of the Doyle family, acts as an important symbol of the intrusion of war into their otherwise quiet and unexceptional existence. For this is the Ireland of what in the South was quaintly called the *Emergency*, and other considerations apart, the evocation of the period. The details of everyday life, are a superb achievement. It will be an eye-opener for the young reader and a nostalgic treat for the older one. Beneath this, there is a heart-warming story of two cousins, one Irish, one English, brought together in Dun Laoghaire by war. The author's greatest gift is to take the utterly ordinary events of their fairly limited lives and accord them, through her art, the significance of timelessness and universality. We grow with the girls through their lives at home and school. We watch the succession of developments in their relationships, whether with one another, with the adult members of the family, or with their first young men. We enjoy their fun, and we sympathize with their disappointments. Above all, we are allowed to eavesdrop on their dreams, those illusionary moments unclouded by the realities of a Europe where war is raging, a war which threatens to disrupt even the quietest existences. As her epigraph, Joan O'Neill uses Yeats' *To a Child Dancing in the Wind*:

Being young you have not known  
The fool's triumph, nor yet  
Love lost as soon as won,  
Nor the best labourer dead  
And all the sheaves to bind.

It is in the ability to capture that state--what Lizzie in this book calls at one point "waiting, waiting, endless waiting"--that real writers of children's fiction distinguish themselves. The really great ones go one step further to remind their readers, young as they may be, that the best laborers do die, leaving the sheaves untied. Our greatest adult writers, of course, convey this effortlessly for us adult readers. We await with much interest a continuation of the flowering of children's fiction, Irish style, which may do it for our children and their friends. Therein will lie the real possibility held out by our Taoiseach, Mr. Albert Reynolds, in one of his first speeches on taking office of shutters opening and light being let in.

## Postmodernism in Youth Literature : A Road Away from the Reader?

by  
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Postmodernism and youth literature, a juxtaposition of two concepts that each is difficult, not to say impossible to define. Postmodernism is an ambiguous term which seems to have as many meanings as there are attempts to define it. It has been said that postmodernity is a culture of fragmentary sensations, eclectic nostalgia, disposable simulacra, and promiscuous superficiality, in which traditionally valued qualities of depth, coherence, meaning, originality, and authenticity are evacuated or dissolved amid the random swirl of empty signals. Furthermore, postmodernism may be seen as a continuation of modernism's alienated mood and disorienting techniques and at the same time as an abandonment of its determined quest for artistic coherence in a fragmented world.

Did you get that? Never mind! I shall revert to parts of the definition when they are relevant.

As for youth literature, the problem of definition is deceptively simple, being mostly related to the age of the reader. We usually have an idea of what youth is, and we may use several explanations: adolescence, the period between childhood and maturity; teenager, thirteen to nineteen years old; or young adults. The difficulty does not arise until we try to relate *youth* to a limited subject, such as what kind of books are especially appropriate for youth. Do we then talk about thirteen-year-old readers or nineteen-year-olds? I hope we shall get closer to an understanding of these questions by a gradual approach starting with the development of youth literature.

In the more than two thousand year long history of written literature, the idea of special books for young people, whether they be children or adolescents, is not much more than two to three hundred years old. If we don't include the religious tracts written for children in the seventeenth century. While the novel was coming into its own as a popular means of pastime for readers from all classes, children's books were first and foremost intended for

educational purposes. When John Newbery in 1744 marketed his first children's book, *A Little Pretty Pocketbook*, he announced it in the spirit of Horace's *utile dulce* delighting and instructing the reader that it was "intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly."

An even better example of the way Newbery catered to the demand that children's books should be useful, is the title of his most famous publication in 1751: *The Lilliputian Magazine; or the Young Gentleman and Lady's Golden Library. Being an Attempt to Mend the World, to Render the Society of Man more Amiable and to Establish the Plainness, Simplicity, Virtue, and Wisdom of the Golden Age, so much Celebrated by the Poets and Historians.*

I shall not bore you by repeating the whole history of children's literature, where the stress has been more on the usefulness than on the amusement in the origin of children's books. As for division according to age, Aidan Chambers has called attention to Sara Trimmer who in 1802 tried to class books according to age "by supposing all young gentlemen and ladies to be *children* till they were *fourteen*, and *young persons* till they are at least *twenty-one*."<sup>1</sup> In spite of this early attempt at distinction between books for children and books for youth, the tendency was more towards division according to sex. At the same time boys and girls as readers were separated from small children and infants. While the utilitarian principle of children's literature was to survive for a long time, the first children's books intended for pure amusement emerged at the middle of the nineteenth century, with *A Book of Nonsense* in 1846 and the even more influential *Alice in Wonderland* in 1865. This may be said to be the beginning of *modernism* in children's literature, that is to say a literature whose aim is to amuse, not to teach.

The concept of education lived on especially in books for girls, or young ladies as they were often called in an attempt to flatter the reader. Though the main function of these

books was to serve as a homily on how to behave to be accepted in society, and not least, how to catch a husband., they may be called literature for youth although limited to the female half. Sometimes a talented author wrote so well that the readers forgot the message or read the book in a way different from what the author had intended, as was the case with *Little Women* by Louisa Alcott first published in 1868, and still in print. In a way, this can be said to be the beginning of a genre that was still alive a few decades ago.

While books for *young ladies* put emphasis on life in the home, on emotional ties, and on good behavior, books for boys had a much wider range where leaving home was usually necessary to win experience and enjoy exciting adventures.

These books were, and still are to a certain extent, aimed at readers of all ages, "boys from 7 to 70" as they were often advertised, but read by girls as well. Action is their main point, and lively incidents must take place the whole time. The demand for action may be called an *epic imperative* while depiction of characters and verisimilitude of events are of less importance. This in a way, has made boys' books more universal because they are not so closely related to certain norms of social behavior as are the girls' books. Changes in the girls' gender role have, with a few exceptions, made girls' books obsolete because girls are no longer expected to behave in the same way as their mothers. *Little Women* is no more seen as providing an ideal, but *Treasure Island* is still an exciting adventure, and Huck Finn on his raft is almost timeless.

There is, however, a similarity between *Huckleberry Finn* and *Little Women*. Both books deal with young people on the threshold of adulthood, going through a development from thoughtless child into a situation where they have to take the responsibility for their own lives as well as those of others, whether through marriage as in the case of the girls, or by learning to deal with the norms of society as Huck learns through his relationship with the negro slave Jim. These two books might constitute a kind of prototype of the genre called youth literature--books about adolescents facing the problems encountered in the stages between childhood and adulthood.

Whether anticipating marriage or independence from family, the great difference between the destiny of boys and girls was always an undercurrent of moralizing in accordance

with the bourgeois values of the time. The young readers were given an idealized picture of what society expected of adolescence depending on the situation and the gender of the protagonist. An important component was the relationship between writer and reader. The writers more or less knew that their readers would belong to a rather close circle of middle class society as would the characters in their books except when the writer wanted to give the readers a glimpse of another kind of society, for instance by depicting slum conditions in order to teach the important virtue of charity. Many facts of reality were excluded from the books, and others were glossed over in conformity with what society thought appropriate. Marriage might be the undisguised goal of girls, but the mention of sexuality was taboo.

The themes were varied in many ways, but the essence of what was to be the modern youth novel may be said to have been developed in the second half of the nineteenth century though the term youth literature was not as yet in common use. The books were mostly divided into boys' books and girls' books, and sometimes one might talk of books for young girls or ladies. Whatever it was called, the genre continued for about one hundred years without much changing its form, its content, or its implied message. What changed were the readers and the society in which they lived.

For one thing, not only did the number of potential readers grow as education became more widespread, but the readership became more heterogeneous comprising youth from different social strata. The middle class no longer had a monopoly on literature although the old bourgeois ideals would dominate literature for children and youth for a long time to come. Perhaps as a result of this, but probably more because of a general change in the view of children, the readers became younger, and books that were intended for fourteen to sixteen year old readers, were read by children of ten to thirteen. One of the results of this was that the writers no longer knew with any confidence who their readers were.

The changes in readership were gradual, but the events of 1968 influenced the direction of youth literature as well as our whole Western world overnight. Leaving aside the consequences for society, the implications for youth literature were significant. A few authors had raised points of contemporary problems in youth literature before, but now writers wanted to discuss all kinds of current political and

social questions in books for youth and even children. They discussed these questions not according to traditional values or in continuation of bourgeois moralizing. They sided with the youth they wrote about apparently defending even serious crime, and indirectly or directly, urging the readers to revolt against society. What the writers did not seem to realize was that the readers seldom, probably never, were the unhappy, asocial outcasts to whom the books were addressed.

In the following, I shall sketch the typical books of the period, and I am sure you will recognize the topics which I shall mention in alphabetical order: abortion, alcoholics, atomic bomb, conscientious objection, death, divorce, drugs, emancipation, juvenile delinquency, mental and physical handicaps, mobs inside and outside school, old age, peace movement, sexuality, suicide, unemployment, unmarried mothers, and war.

Many of these subjects concerned adults more than young people, but some authors would also deal with topics of special interest to adolescents. Less talented writers who lacked the ability to do more than scratch the surface would mix together several serious problems into a salad that I have been tempted to call **problem pornography**. These books were read with shuddering excitement mostly by girls of eleven or twelve. There were also earnest writers who wanted to reach young adults to make them aware of the vital problems of society, but their books were usually lumped with the other youth books and consumed by younger reader while adolescents looked elsewhere for reading material.

The new area of topics required a new language. Structure and grammar became relaxed, the style more verbal, trying to imitate the way youngsters talked, or rather what writers imagined to be idiomatic. Sometimes the result was a real innovation that brought new energy to youth literature, but at other times, it served as an excuse for bad writing. The important point to all these writers was, however, to bring a message across to the reader, and for this reason they tried to be as plain and unambiguous as possible.

In spite of the many weak points of the problem oriented books of the 1970s, they can be said to have opened up a new road for youth literature by making it permissible to write about all kinds of subjects without restrictions and to experiment with language. Even if the authors still kept mostly to the accepted form of

youth literature, the *epic imperative* by putting excitement into the narrative to keep the reader interested--a new kind of youth novel had emerged.

Approximately at the same time, some writers began to experiment with new forms in youth literature. Their purpose was to give the youth novel a literary valid form on a par with the novel for adults choosing young people as their characters to relate to their readers. The situations and the problems encountered would often be only implicitly connected with modern youth, but was calculated to catch their interest. Contributory factors to many of these books were fantastic fiction and magic realism as well as science fiction that invited playing with time and space.

An early example is Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* from 1967 where three young people in Wales re-enact the Celtic tragedy of Lleu, Blodeuwedd, and Gronw Pebyr. At the same time light is shed on problems experienced by the three present-day characters. The novel has been called a milestone in British youth literature of the 1960s and exactly for that reason was probably difficult to read at the time of its first publication.

Other writers have preferred a realistic setting but used a fragmented composition. An example is Aidan Chambers who in *Dance on My Grave* (1982) used a kind of collage consisting of notes with flashbacks written by the protagonist Hal after the event, reports from the social worker, Hal's English compositions in school, letters, and cutting from a newspaper. The resemblance to film and video technique is reinforced by Hal's use of the term rewinding. Aidan Chambers is not, however, interested only in breaking up the traditional composition, he also wants to introduce a difficult subject, homosexuality. By the way, Hal approaches his own situation; not only does he gradually come to understand himself better, but the reader shares his insight.

*Dance on My Grave* is an interesting youth novel using postmodern effects such as fragmenting the text and breaking up the composition in a way that helps the reader to a better understanding. The language is no hindrance, although mostly told by Hal who is an intelligent sixteen-year-old used to express himself in writing as we see from his English composition.

It is now time to try a definition of post-modernism as used in connection with youth novels. A key word is *fragmentary*. In a

world that no longer can be seen as an integral whole, the writers choose a composition that mirrors the scattered picture of the world. As science contributes to the confusion by postulating new ideas about the universe, about space and time, the writers feel free to create a reality where magic forces from past or present, or even from another dimension may break in as a matter of course. Another key word is therefore *supernatural interference*, not as ghost stories, but as aspects of reality. The New Zealand writer, Margaret Mahy, has used the break with the ordinary in *The Changeover* (1984) to throw light on the transformation of adolescence that present-day Laura experiences. She has to go through the rites of becoming a witch to save her small brother from evil influences. In *The Tricksters* (1986) three characters from another dimension visit the girls Harry's family at their summer resort and bring about a crisis in the family.

The four novels I have mentioned, *The Owl Service*, *Dance on My Grave*, *The Changeover*, and *The Tricksters*, may serve as examples of the *beginning* of postmodern youth novels. They are really difficult to read when the initial reluctance to a new kind of telling a story has been overcome. But they are all actual *youth* novels, and expect a certain maturity and experience from their readers. Even then, all may not be understood, but the novels will make an impression deep enough to make the reading worth while. *The Haunting* by the way also a title of one of Margaret Mahy's books is used not only to illuminate a realistic situation, but also to put a new kind of excitement into the book. The reader has to discover what is going on. This device has been used successfully by many writers who without indulging in cheap ghost stories want to get on speaking terms with otherwise reluctant readers.

These books have left behind the urge to bring across a social or political *message*, the *raison d'être* of problem oriented books. Their import is to make the readers understand better the difficult change that takes place during the transition to adulthood. Margaret Mahy's title, *The Change Over* is another example.

Now we have to look at the definition of youth. When I asked Aidan Chambers what was the age of his implicit readers, he answered without hesitation, "Sixteen to seventeen." Not all writers are so explicit, but it would not be out of place to regard the kind of books we talk about as written for young adults, that is

to say fifteen to sixteen years old. In accordance with this, my definition of youth, young adult, or adolescent in connection with the youth novel will be somebody about fifteen or sixteen years old, take or leave a year. It will not be boys and girls of twelve to thirteen or even younger.

As mentioned earlier, the readers of books given the stamp *youth* are usually much younger, down to ten or eleven, while the intended readers look with scorn on such books without deigning to find out what they are really like.

What is then the difference between a thirteen-year-old and a sixteen-year-old where understanding books is concerned? The books I have so far mentioned are not really difficult regarding language and presentation; they can be read by so-called good readers of twelve, but will they really enjoy these books? What I want to emphasize is the fact that reading is much more than technical skill in understanding letters, words, and sentences. That is basic reading, necessary for everyday life, followed by the next step which is the ability to read textbooks and study one or more textbooks. In reading fiction, another development is needed, dependent on age, maturity, and emotional as well as intellectual understanding and experience. What is easily comprehended by an adolescent may be completely beyond the understanding of a twelve-year-old, not because he is slow on the uptake, but because it is outside his understanding. On the other hand, what is new and exciting to the child of twelve may be trivial to the youth of fifteen.

This tallies with the code-set Peter Hunt calls *life* when he claims that experience of text is the convergence or clash to two code-sets; those of *life* and of *text*. The code of text is knowledge of literary conventions, generic explanations, intertextual reference, etc. Integrating the codes of text and of genre will be an important part of the reading process.

Peter Hunt draws our attention to an important point when he calls the implied audience for so-called children's literature a developing one. The difference in reading experience is one of the factors that separate children and young adults in their attitude to literature. Learning to read fiction is to learn to fill in telling gaps, and when that has been learned to be able to cope with changes in the horizons of expectation.

All books assume a certain knowledge and experience in the reader, depending among other things on the age of the implied audience.

The writers cannot explain everything. For example, when Alice enters a bus to go to town, even quite young children are expected to know what a bus and a town are, and that Alice, because of her name, is a girl. The older the readers are, the more they are expected to understand without being told. Filling in gaps in the text depends on more than knowledge, it is an appeal to imagination as well as experience.

We have only to look at the detailed and often longwinded novels of Dickens and Thackeray to understand how much it was once necessary to explain to a public not yet accustomed to reading novels. Modern novelists take it for granted that the readers understand more without being told. The youth novel has developed along the same lines, and the telling gaps give the readers a possibility to use their own experience to relate to the characters and the situations in the book.

Recognizing a genre is another requirement. Reading *Crime and Punishment* and believing it to be a crime story in the same vein of Agatha Christie is bound to make the readers disappointed if not frustrated if they ever get to finish the book. On the other hand, the experience may prepare the readers to accept what Hans Robert Jauss calls changes in the horizons of expectation, to be receptive to innovations of ideas and structure with an old form. A typical example is the anti-hero of modern adventure stories.

The youth novel today demands more of its readers than formerly, and sometimes it demands too much. *Red Shift* (1973) by Alan Garner is an example of a book that even trained adults find difficult to read with its shifts in time without warning or indications in the text. It belongs to the not insignificant group of youth novels and children's literature that adult critics praise and enjoy analyzing, but which young adults, the implied readers, only seldom read. There is a serious clash of interests where these books are concerned because the encouragement of critics may increase the trend to write more or less impenetrable books for youth.

Obviously a certain amount of experimentation is necessary even in youth novels, and may lead to interest new ways of approaching readers. Authors should be free to write what they like, publishers to publish what they want, and readers to read what they choose. I am afraid that the enthusiasm of critics may lead to an acceptance of these books

as the best choice to offer young readers, and that the readers, as a result, will return to light fiction. Not that in and of itself this is dangerous, but I am so old fashioned that I believe literature should give a valuable dimension to our lives. The youth novel should build a bridge to that literature.

Literature, however, is not the only creative influence in our lives. We are usually much more affected by other media and in youth culture, film, television, and not least video are indisputably the successful rivals of books. By looking closer at these competitors of literature, we might get a better understanding of what the attraction is. Rock videos show us a fragmented world where there is no coherent story, but the combination of sound and a picture make a strong emotional impact on the viewer/listener. In a way, this makes the audience accustomed to a fragmentary representation, but can it be transferred to literature? Aidan Chambers, as well as other writers, have been inspired by video in composing youth novels. The zooming in on characters, the quick cutting from one scene to another, the flashbacks or rewindings are all related to film and video techniques. The question is whether reading is as easy as viewing.

If we take *Red Shift* and turn it into a video, some of the difficulties would disappear. We would know when we were in Roman times, when in the seventeenth century, and when in the present. The emotions would be heavily brought across, but would the depth of the problems be better understood.

Looking again at the definition of post-modernity, we see that the description comes nearer to fit video than books. I repeat: fragmentary sensations, eclectic nostalgia, disposable simulacra, and promiscuous superficiality in which traditionally valued qualities of depth, coherence, meaning, originality, and authenticity are removed or dissolved amid the random swirl of empty signals. Furthermore, postmodernism may be seen as a continuation of modernism's alienated mood, disorienting techniques, and at the same time as an abandonment of its determined quest for artistic coherence in a fragmented world. I am not a specialist on video, but from what I have seen, several of the components mentioned can be found in at least some rock videos. As to books, I think concepts like fragmentary, loss of traditionally valued qualities of depth and coherence, and disorienting techniques can be used to describe the experimental youth novel.

As reading usually demands more of the audience than viewing, I don't believe there is an easy road from the video to the book even if there is a superficial resemblance in technique. Therefore, the more sophisticated the writers become in using the technique of the visual media, the more difficult their books will be and the greater the distance between the reader and writer. Another question is whether the sophisticated young adult who has the ability to read youth novels will not rather go straight on to adult literature. There is nothing new in the fact that young people read other books besides those explicitly written for their age group, whether romance or adventure. It is sufficient to look at the autobiographies of writers such as Graham Green to get an impression of what kind of books children and adolescents actually enjoyed, and you probably all have your own list of favorites. What is new is that young adults may stop reading the books aimed at their age group. In that case, what is the purpose of youth novels?

The serious youth novel should be able to tell the readers of circumstances and situations they do not find elsewhere. There should be a relevance to the readers' own problems, be they psychological or social, and the readers should also get to know the problems of other adolescent boys and girls different from themselves. In addition, new avenues of thought might be opened up and engage the readers in a critical attitude to their own specific situation as well as to the world at large. The main difference between a youth novel and a novel for adults on the same theme would probably be that the former looks at the world from the point of view of young adults and portrays characters of the same age whom the readers can relate to and recognize as their peers. But the youth novel should not only reproduce a kind of youth culture, it should also prepare young adults for the society they are about to enter as adults with new privileges, new responsibilities, and also new obstacles.

For these reasons we need the youth novel, and if the youth novel in the wake of postmodernism becomes a closed book to all but the sophisticated adult critics and a handful of precocious adolescents, even children who have been used to reading may turn away from literature when they grow older. When I earlier asserted that authors had freedom to write what they liked, I added that readers had the right to choose. We can compel pupils to read a book as an assignment in class, and we can

even help them understand a difficult text, but we cannot compel them to go on reading books that are alien to them.

There are still plenty of exciting, well-written books with themes that appeal to young adults. More important there are excellent books that the readers don't know because they have never had a go at them. It may be the title, the cover, or just general lack of curiosity that keep readers away from books they would enjoy. These books need to be presented to the readers in a way that make them at least curious to see what it is all about.

As a transition from childhood to adulthood in reading habits, we need an intermediate phase where young adults learn to appreciate new kinds of books. But there are signs that on the one hand, adolescent readers regard books marketed as *youth novels* beneath their dignity, and on the other hand that many *youth novels* are too complicated for those willing to make a try at reading them. Film and video are so much more accessible, especially when the books by imitating the technique of visual media become more inaccessible.

There are, of course, writers of youth novels who wish to write in a way that is easy to understand and who have not forgotten the *epic imperative*, but these writers seldom get the same critical acclaim as the literary more interesting books, interesting to adults, that is.

Other matters as well may put obstacles in the way of communication between youth literature and its readers, but I have chosen to concentrate on an aspect where experimentation to a certain extent has got the better of accessibility. If this process under the influence of postmodernism continues, there may be not a telling gap, but a real gap between the writers and their implied readers.

## Notes

1. Chamber, Aidan in *Booktalk*. London, 1985, p. 85.
2. Hunt, Peter. "Necessary Misreadings: Directions in Narrative Theory for Children's Literature," *Studies in Literary Imagination*, Vol. XVIII (1985), no.2, pp. 107-121.

## Social Issues in Australian Children's Literature

by  
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In the past ten years there has been a discernible trend in Australian children's literature towards the inclusion of social problems as subjects to be treated within children's books. This probably reflects a world-wide trend to raise children's social consciousness through the books they read.

Australia, in 1992, is suffering severe economic hardship with unemployment, child homelessness, and drug and alcohol abuse high on the list of social problems affecting children. Along with these immediate social problems are the wider issues of the environment, multiculturalism, and the rights of the aboriginal people--issues which daily concern our media. Considerable controversy and debate has arisen within our society as many people blame the latter issues for the economic decline of the nation. These issues, of course, have become topics for children to study and discuss in schools with educational authorities setting guidelines for the approach to be taken by teachers.

It is not surprising, therefore, that children's authors should be caught up in the debate and children's books are seen as a legitimate forum for authors to impart values and present a specific ideological stance. Is this the purpose of children's literature?

What seems to be a growing trend towards a new didacticism in Australian children's which is being resisted by some authors. For example Victor Kelleher, an award-winning author for both children and adults, states that, "I often suspect that many kids' books, including my own, are not discussed for what they are but rather are measured against what they should be. That *should*, that hidden imperative, is too frequently a corollary of fixed modes of thought." (Kelleher, p.221) Kelleher seems to have a point in being concerned with the *fixed modes of thought* of what a book *should be*, for in 1991 the judges of the Australian Children's Book Awards stated in their introduction to the awards, "the judges were encouraged to see the continuing trend of producing strong, non-sexist books and the development of a

realistic and authentic portrayal of adults. There is an increasing recognition in children's literature that male and female characters can play an equal role in all aspects of life." (*Reading Times*, p.5) While I wholeheartedly agree with these sentiments, there is a hidden imperative here for authors to conform to the ideology of gender equality which translates to feminist theory, i.e. books with mainly male characters are out; romance fiction for females is out; all children's books must now conform to a non-sexist feminist agenda.

It would seem that authors and publishers are responding to perceived societal needs in producing books which they hope will be instrumental in giving children correct attitudes toward social issues. In this they will, of course, be aided by librarians, teachers, and parents who will guide children toward books which they feel inculcate the currently accepted values put forward by various influential sectors of society including political initiatives with a social context. If we accept this, in whatever good cause, we are inviting the *teachers and preachers* to take over, and we will see a resurgence of the didactic *evangelical style* novels of the nineteenth century from which we thought we had escaped.

This growing trend toward a renewed didacticism seems to be particularly affecting picture books, many of which state the cause for which they were written. The author is not even relaying on the child to get the message throughout the story line! The danger in this overt didacticism is that children are not given the right to think for themselves or to form their own opinions. In the face of the overwhelming effect of the mass media and technology in the lives of our children, it is essential that children's books promote the creative imagination of the child reader rather concentrating on some explicit social issue.

I am not convinced that literature for children should be "a tool to shape the young to the needs of the world." (Jackson, 1989) Literature should not be a vehicle for propaganda, no

matter how important we consider the issue. Children should be empowered through literature, encouraged to grow, to learn about themselves and others. Literature should give children that magic; that sense of wonder and hope in the future which will help them to face the problems and issues which are so blatantly obvious within the world community. Children must be given the opportunity to question, to criticize, and form an opinion for themselves. They should not be coerced into any current political or social correctness or expected to conform to any particular authors ideological stance.

The theme of this conference is towards the twenty-first century; through their leadership, school librarians can encourage children to read widely and to discuss and question the social issues which are raised. They can promote diversity, and the individuals right *to choose*. We must not allow ourselves to become *purifiers* of children's books or allow ourselves to manipulate children through the literature they read.

These ideological questions affect us all and need to be fully discussed. It should also be of some interest to teacher-librarians whether children are *socialized through literature*. Do children read *the lectures* which many children's books contain or are children of that subversive race who despite all our ministrations miss the moral of the story entirely and formulate their own meanings? As we head towards the twenty first century, the implications for teacher-librarians contained in this paper are ones which require considerable deliberation.

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# Literature and Literacy: The Real Book Approach to Children Learning to Read

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## Introduction

There will always be contention about the best way to teach children to read. Broadly, there are two approaches, the traditional approach with its roots in behaviorism and what is known as the real book approach. At present, the official line would seem to favor a traditional approach. Many schools and teachers agree with this choosing to cling to what they regard as a safety net, the reading program. Commercially produced programs have changed in recent years. Many provide what they call extended reading. That is, they include story books with the basic material. The problem is that some teachers, exhausted with the struggle to get children through the basal stages, regard the additional material as optional. Thus, the teaching of reading goes on without much reference to *real* books. It can be foreseen that this situation will continue and perhaps increase as the demands of school tests - however informally - at seven years is now a legal requirement in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The alternative approach, using real books, has had a bad press especially in the months leading up to the General Election (April, 1992) when education was a political issue. The Minister of Education at the time, Kenneth Clarke, referred to the real book approach as *curious* and *trendy*. (*Daily Mail*, January 10, 1991) It was blamed for the perceived fall in reading standards. This prompted the questions, "What information do teachers have access to with regard to the real book approach?" Is it possible that some educators are dismissive of the approach because they believe that it requires only that children have access to a wide range of books? What more does it involve? Is it worth the inevitable revolution in organization, attitude, and teaching style? Such issues follow as the development of the real book approach is traced from the late 1960s when Kenneth Goodman's work became available in Britain. With his one-time

colleague, Frank Smith, he introduced the term *psycholinguistics* to the reading curriculum. The idea was developed in Britain notably by Margaret Meek at the London Institute of Education and by Liz Waterland, a primary school teacher in an English school, who wrote about it from her own practical experience operating it. An article by Colin Mills is included for the way it points out how the common language of education derived from the behaviorist tradition acts as a hindrance when applied to the real book approach. Finally, an article by Henrietta Dombey offers readers a practical demonstration or exemplar of how one teacher helps very young children to relate to books. In this teacher's class enjoyment is important, but it is a by-product of the prime reason for story time--to initiate the children as *true* reader.

## Psycholinguistics, Linguistics, and Reading

Smith and Goodman<sup>1</sup> take care to stress that psycholinguistics is not a method of teaching reading. It is the study of language as it relates to the development of thinking. As a way of looking at what a reader does when engaged in reading, it casts light on the process.

Linguistic analysis posits that language has two levels--a surface structure and a deep structure. The surface structure is the sounds or written representation of language while the deep structure relates to meaning. For psycholinguists, it is the deep structure that is important in reading to the extent that, "The deep level process of identifying meaning either precedes or makes unnecessary the process of identifying individual words." (p 180) Thus, traditional approaches which depend on decoding are despatched.

Psycholinguists place emphasis on learning rather than teaching. They compare the way children learn to read with the way they learn to speak. Acquiring speech is a natural process for the normal child. The en-

vironment conducive to encouraging the development of reading is spelt out, "The child learning to read, like the child learning to speak, seems to need the opportunity to examine a large sample of language, to generate hypotheses about the regularities underlying it and to test and modify these hypotheses on the basis of feedback that is appropriate to the unspoken rules that he happens to be testing." (p 180)

Agreeing with Chomsky's notion of a language acquisition device, Smith and Goodman state, "The child is already programmed to learn to read. He needs written language that is both interesting and comprehensible, and teachers who understand language-learning and who appreciate his competence as a language learner." (p 180)

Smith and Goodman's legacy to practitioners may be summed up in two points--the appropriate text for a young reader is a story, and children acquire rules which they try out on stories. This should be acknowledged as their method of tackling a story which leads to modification and refinement as they get more practice.

### How Texts Teach What Readers Learn: Margaret Meek.<sup>2</sup>

Goodman and Smith's assumptions receive support from Meek's article. This is a precis of research<sup>3</sup> carried out with a group of teachers who studied individual children with reading difficulties. Meek amplifies the title of the article by reference to children's books, mainly picture books.

Borrowing from Culler<sup>4</sup>, Meek articulates *literary competencies* that are acquired from reading *good* books. She begins with items that might be considered mundane. Taking *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins, P., 1968, Bodley Head) she demonstrates how a five-year-old at risk as a reader related to it. Unlike accustomed readers, the child explored every page of the book beginning with the outside cover. In this way, he found out about authorship, publishing, audience, illustrations, and their purpose. Meek draws the readers' attention to how the content of this simple reading lesson is often overlooked because it is taken for granted that everybody knows these things. Adults tend to forget that they are new to the novice reader.

Drawing on John Burningham's picture books, Meek exemplifies the *reading secrets* that such stories hold. In *Mr. Gumpy's Outing* (Burningham, J., 1970, Cape), a couple of

children followed by different animals ask to join Mr. Gumpy for a boat ride. In each case, he asserts but attaches double meaning conditions individual to each request. For example:

"May I come, please?" said the pig.

"Very well, but don't muck about."

"Can we come too?" said the chickens.

"Yes, but don't flap," said Mr. Gumpy.

Meek elucidates the reading lessons contained in such texts. "The reading lessons, about how dialogue appears on the page, the formal ways of making requests, the way the sentences appear on a page, go hand in hand with what children have already begun to discover about language as a rich and adaptable instrument for the realization of intentions."<sup>5</sup> (Halliday, 1969, p 16) Taking another text of Burningham's, *Come Away from the Water, Shirley* (Burningham, J., 1977, Cape), Meek shows how children learn the conventions of writing. In this case, young readers work out that the two stories, one seemingly real, the other seemingly fantastic, being presented side by side are both *true*. To value the story, the reader has to realize this. In other words, he has to be aware of the game the author is playing.

Meek describes a page in a quality picture book as "an icon explicated by the viewer. It holds the story until there is a telling." (p 12) Children return to stories repeatedly gaining more from them with successive readings. For this reason, it is important for adults to refrain from telling children all that is in a story. Children uncover the layers of a story for themselves as they become more sophisticated readers with more experience to bring to the text. As a general rule, children revisit stories more than competent adult readers who are less careful and less appreciative readers. Children learn that reading is about extending beyond the words and illustrations. They allow themselves to be carried from the familiar to the novel. They are introduced to metaphor to make new meanings. The example given is taken from *Granpa* (Burningham, J., 1984, Cape) where metaphor is conveyed by the illustrations. The passage of time is suggested by the depiction of the changing seasons. Thus, child readers learn to seek meanings beyond the words. Allied to this is what Meek terms *intertextuality*, which occurs when reference is made in a story to other stories as in *The Jolly Postman* and

*Other People's Letters*. (Ahlberg, J. and A., 1986, Heinemann) When children recognize and savor this device which is "a very serious business, part of the whole intricate network of words which mean more than they say" (p 95), they have entered the fraternity or network of readers. Meek likens the bond this creates between author/illustrator and reader to a conspiracy. The progress of children who learn to read with real books is difficult to measure, but indications of reading development are when children move from "more of the same" to "I might try something different" and when they show growing tolerance of ambiguity.

Meek sums up his thesis, "Real books are good reading texts for learners because they introduce children to the discourse styles of various genres." (p 39) She continues that experimental authors are constantly changing the genres and children, too, have an influence by making different demands. She refers to the work of Harold Rosen<sup>6</sup> to make the further but related point that children who are used to real books can take the language of text books in their stride. They realize that curriculum texts vary. In the words of Rosen, "Topic discourse covers its narrative tracks" and this, Meek pronounces is "another text-taught lesson." (p 39)

This is all convincingly wholesome but it is easy to see why some people in the education field find it hard to accept and practice. The traditional teacher cannot endorse a system where the texts teach the children, and how they are learning the reading competencies is unknown except to say that the child readers give themselves lessons. Stated in such terms, Meek's thesis suggests there is no need for a teacher save to provide a range of books. Quite naturally, this type of message upsets teachers. However, a pamphlet published by a teacher who had practiced the real book approach for ten years allayed any fears that teachers were redundant. Liz Waterland published *Read with Me: An Apprenticeship Approach to Reading*<sup>7</sup> in 1985.

### ***Read with Me: An Apprenticeship Approach to Reading, Liz Waterland***

Waterland begins by recalling why she moved to a real book approach. It was the result of several realizations. One, she recognized that she was operating in an behaviorist tradition that views reading as a hierarchy of specific skills to be taught sequentially in small units. Secondly, she was

perplexed by her failure to imbue her pupils with a love of books and reading. Like every teacher, she had a percentage of pupils who experienced difficulty with reading. This bothered her, but her greatest chagrin was the large number of her pupils who proved to be **reluctant readers**,<sup>8</sup> (Aidan Chambers) they could read but did not choose to. Thirdly, she pondered why this should be so as she had diligently kept abreast of developments in the teaching of reading and was an acknowledged authority being involved in refresher courses for teachers.

It was only when she began reading Goodman and Smith's work on psycholinguistics that she saw her possible mistake. After much thought, she decided the only way for her was to change to a real book approach. She began in a small way with the full support of her headmaster by introducing the new way with a reception class. What evolved became known as the apprenticeship approach to reading. She describes it:

I came to adopt a view of the learner not as passive and dependent like the cuckoo chick but rather as an active and already partly competent sharer in the task of learning to read. Here the model is apprenticeship to a craftsman. (What is, in engineering circles, called **sitting with Nelly**.) Consider the way apprenticeship works: the learner first undertakes the simplest parts of the job, then gradually more complex ones, increasing the share he can cope with and all the time working alongside, under the control of and with the help of the craftsman. The apprentice does not sit passively with his mouth open; he works actively with the tools of his trade in his hand. (p 8)

The pamphlet outlines her experience from the time she initiated this new approach. It is clearly constructed and includes five key points extrapolated from the theory of psycholinguistics. These are discussed at a practical level in relation to the classroom teacher. They are--in many ways the acquisition of written language is comparable with that of spoken language; reading cannot be taught in a formal, sequenced way any more than speech can; reading is not a series of small skills fluently used; it is a process of getting meaning; the text offered to the child is crucially important; and the role of the adult is to be a guiding friend. This is summed up in the quote, "Instead of assuming that children can only read what they have been taught, we must assume that they can only read what they

understand and can interact with, and that the teaching of words has little influence on this process." (p 12)

Waterland is realistic and forthright which is probably what endeared her to other teachers. Having read the theory, she reacts, "Nor were the writers I had studied very helpful in the actual translation of theory into classroom practice." (p 20) Reading the practicalities of her translation of theory into practice over a ten year period leaves no room to underestimate the effort it requires. Waterland presents the material under three headings--the role of the parent, the role of the teacher, and resourcing. Each is a mine field involving diplomacy, dedication, and money respectively. It is obvious she sets out to be helpful to the teacher who wants to follow in her footsteps. Thus, she confronts contentious issues such as recording progress, the place of phonics, and the suitability of real books with children with special needs. In each case, she gives examples, sometimes in the form of diagrams, of what she has worked out. Waterland did not minimize the enormity of the change from individual teacher control to partnership with pupils, colleagues, and parents. Yet, as sales of her study proclaim, it appealed to teachers who were encouraged to consider the place of real books in the process of learning.

This is not the end of the story. Putting together Meek's scholarly wisdom and Waterland's practicality proved not to be the royal road to success. An article by Colin Mills<sup>9</sup> records the problems encountered by one teacher who sought to plough this furrow.

### **Making Sense of Reading: Key Words or Grandma Swagg: Colin Mills**

Mills carried out research in a school where a class teacher was changing from a reading scheme to a real books approach to teaching reading. In essence, he discovered that the vocabulary being used by teacher and parents to describe the new approach was *school* language and in this there lay a danger. The example is given of a parent who, while acknowledging his son's interest in reading, worries that he does not seem to be able to recognize the *key words*. As Mill's says, this expression has its origins in a commercially produced program published decades ago. Perhaps there are grounds to excuse the parent's ignorance but Mills finds that the teacher is also bound by behaviorist vocabulary that he speculates she learnt when taking her teacher education course. An example of this is

a quote from her diary, "I need to work harder at knowing the stages they are at but I think this approach, this method, is just as structured." (p 29)

Mills' article reveals the inappropriateness of this vocabulary derived from a view of reading as decoding to describe a view of reading as a social process. The mismatch is captured in the title of the article which refers to two incidents related in the text. One has already been described (the father using the term *key words*). The other refers to a situation where a child is discussing a book where Grandma Swagg features as a character. Mills uses this to illustrate the real book approach:

When children read their first independent texts, they not only bring linguistic resources, they bring social and cultural understandings. They bring understandings of other texts, codes of interpretation learned from their *reading* of popular culture. They bring the *stances* of wonder, interpretation and evaluation that they have learned from their teachers and from other co-readers (Isn't that funny? I wonder what?). They use also those shared processes of sense making which they have learned socially. (p 49)

Mills aptly sums it up a couple of pages later, "An interpersonal process becomes an intrapersonal one." (p 50) Mills<sup>9</sup> points to the work of Foucault (1972) which speaks of the "determining power of discourses." Emanating from Vygotsky's (1979, p 126) view of higher mental functions as socially formed and culturally transmitted, this approach allies itself with tracing ways in which literacy is "socially constructed" in classrooms. To employ a vocabulary at odds with an interpretative, social process in any discourse about reading only serves to constrain thought and hinder the formation of metaphor and concept. The way forward is contained in Mills' concluding sentence, "Our way of looking at [reading] and talking about it needs to change to take into account new readers, new texts and the contexts in which they will all interact with one another." (p 50)

The next article by Henrietta Dombey, set in the classroom, demonstrates how to introduce young children into the fellowship of readers.

### **Partners in the Telling: Henrietta Dombey**

Storytime is an unshakable tradition in all infant and nursery school classes. Dombey's

article, however, describes story telling with an important difference. The story telling session which is described is preceded by a routine typical of many nursery classes. Activities stop and materials are tidied giving an air of finality. Something different is about to take place. In Mrs. G's case, she takes her accustomed chair at the carpeted area and waits until all are seated. The adults are instructed that during this time Mrs. G is not to be interrupted, and perhaps her devoting her total attention to it is not lost on her young pupils who are expected to follow her example. Mrs. G begins every story time by inviting the children to join her in finding out what happens, and this is the criterion she uses to judge whether their contributions are acceptable.

Having set the scene, Dombey provides a one page transcript of an extract from a story session taken by Mrs. G. At first glance, it seems chaotic, but guided by Dombey, the reader sees what Mrs. G is aiming for and how she sets about achieving it. The two occasions on the transcript when she responds to a child's contribution are relevant to the telling of the story. The first is a tentative prediction which was, in fact, accurate while the second is a worthy interpretation of the moral of the story. Mrs. G's acknowledgement of these is neither effusive nor artificial. On the first occasion, her response to the prediction is, "Let's find out and see." This reply teaches the children that what happens next is discovered by reading further. Thus, Mrs. G conveys to the children what people do when reading. On the second occasion, Mrs. G acknowledges by repeating what the child said. It happens that his utterance was in non-standard English, "He never died," yet Mrs. G repeats it verbatim. Mrs. G is tolerant of things like this that many teachers would censure and curb. For example, there are no rules inhibiting interruptions, and story time is not used to inculcate social attributes such as turn-taking and listening to each other or when teacher speaks. Mrs. G is self-effacing rather than dominant, inviting the children to take control and giving anyone who wishes, a say. Mrs. G prefers to create "order in children's minds rather than a more easily observable order in behavior." (p 79)

Mrs. G's class is drawn from a deprived council estate where there are few book-reading adults. The children had been attending nursery school for seven months at the time the story session was taped by Dombey. She reports that the twenty children present all

seemed to listen, and four interrupted frequently. Mrs. G's success with the children is reflected in the sketch Dombey draws of one of them:

He remembers the stories he hears, not merely as a sequence of events, but as the interplay of the emotions and intentions of the characters. Sometimes he shows that he can reconstruct some of the language of the telling. As he turns the pages of a book, his eyes and his fingers reveal that although he is still very hazy on the letters of the alphabet, he has learnt many of the conventions of print. In short, Shaun has learnt some very important lessons about reading. (p 70)

Dombey highlights Mrs. G's way by contrasting it with the *straight* more traditional and more common approach to story time of her assistant. It is interesting to speculate why the assistant who listens to Mrs. G every day does not take pattern from her. Perhaps the difference in approach is accounted for by, "Mrs. G's enthusiasm for and interest in both children's books and children learning to read." (p 71)

Teachers who are attracted by the real book approach to reading gain greatly from an article such as Dombey's which offers them a glimpse of how to involve a class as *partners in the telling*.

## Conclusion

The articles that have been discussed are sufficient to disabuse any skeptic that a real book approach with children is a soft option. To adopt it makes heavy demands on teachers. To begin, they need to understand its underpinnings in psycholinguistics. This means reading the work of theorists like Goodman and Smith which is necessary also to appreciate crucial arguments like those in Mills' article about the importance of appropriate vocabulary. The antecedents of this lie in the work of Vygotsky and in writers who have developed his work. Teachers do not expect to have to read deeply and continuously in this way if they are not studying for advanced qualifications. Yet Waterland's pamphlet testifies to the need for this. She states, "Classroom practice should always have a firm and respectable intellectual basis." Meek's article acts as a warning to teachers not to underestimate quality children's books. They are literature in their own right and should be respected as such. Her article is scattered through with literary criticism of selected children's books as she demonstrates how familiarity with such books makes children

into readers. Dombey's article, while not in the same scholarly league, is preaching a similar text. Taken altogether, the emergent message of this paper is that to make children into readers, the first requirement is to make readers of their teachers.

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# The Role of Children's Books in a Multicultural Society

by

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## The Influence of Reading on the Child

In a paper published by the National Institute of Education, Betsy Mynhier, Reading Consultant with the Kentucky Department of Education, stated the following:

In spite of the competition from the mass media of today, reading continues to increase in importance in the American way of life. As our society continues to grow in technological discovery, more and more types of reading are required. The role of the reading teacher is magnified as he guides boys and girls in applying techniques of critical evaluation of reading to what is seen and heard on radio and television and what is read from the vast amount of printed books, magazines, and newspapers.

The printed page is many things to many people. Reading a book can be a visit to the moon, a means of discovery and awakening, or a euphoria for unleashed emotions and interests. Reading is essential to the existence of our complex system of social arrangement. It is the means by which the past can be relived, arguments and beliefs can be expressed, forms of government can be understood, and generations can be linked to the history of mankind. Truly, reading is the bond that brings people and places together. (4:12)

Educators and librarians have for a long time stressed the power of the written word. As far back as the classic period Aristotle strongly advocated literary instruction. The influence of reading increased during the Middle Ages and was further extended by the Reformation's emphasis on the printed book, mainly as a propaganda device against the Roman Church. During the last five hundred years the use of print has gradually transformed Western civilization into what Spengler called a *Buch-und-lesen Kultur*. One cannot overestimate the influence of certain books on society. This point of view can be illustrated clearly by referring to some of them at random:

*The Bible* - the book that has had a decisive influence on our Western civilization.

Machiavelli's *Il Principe* that laid the foundation for absolutism in government.

The works by Voltaire, J.J. Rousseau and other contemporaries that prepared society for the French Revolution.

Kant, Karl Marx and Sartre who through their philosophic works have influenced modern thinking.

Books like *Oliver Twist* (C. Dickens, Britain), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (H.E. Beecher Stowe, America), *Max Havelaar* (Multatuli, Netherlands) and *Dry the Beloved Country* (A. Paton, South Africa) have opened many eyes to the situation of the poor and the oppressed.

Notwithstanding attitudes that minimize the influence of books on daily life, continuous exposure to advertisements, propaganda and ideological perspectives has a pertinent influence on individuals and the broader society. If this is applicable to a mature person it will especially be true in the case of children who are easily influenced by their surroundings. Difficult as it appears to be to establish precisely children's responses to the books they read, it is even more difficult to assess or measure the effects of the reading of fiction on their development. There is, however, remarkable consensus among educators that extensive reading of quality literature does indeed influence a child's developing social conscience. "Childhood is a time that is lived intensively." The child's reading is an intense activity which engrosses his whole attention; he becomes part of the action, lives the experiences of the characters as if they were his own. We as adults have lost that special capacity for concentration, the imagination and the sensitivity that make it possible. Usually we remain bystanders, while the child makes the entire book his own. Graham Greene said, "Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives." (5:33)

This influence holds true in general but especially in the field of multicultural societies. "Since literature is a product of culture and especially since children's and youth literature is a medium of enculturation or socialization through which values are transmitted to the young, the probability exists that racial attitudes, whether negative or positive will be reflected in it. If negative racial attitudes can be found in any children's literature, then it follows that it is possible that it can negatively foster intro-ethnic values as well as interracial values. (6:(i), (ii))

In an American study some years ago it was demonstrated that the reading and discussion of fiction, based upon the actual day-to-day existence of students, increased sensitivity to human values and brought about greater orientation to human relationships. (1:147)

It is important that teachers and librarians should recognize the part they are playing in transmitting or abolishing racial prejudice in order to promote intercultural and interracial understanding since this is not only an educational matter but also a social one which has far-reaching, socio-political repercussions. According to Madison (3:80) this calls for a comprehensive re-orientation, a totally reversed outlook which affects one's entire system of values. He believes that literature can develop attitudes which make for social tolerance because it cannot be separated from the morality of humanity and the ethical aspects of life which can stimulate racial understanding. An important criterion for analysis must therefore be that of moral, spiritual, and social value content including intercultural and interracial elements. In this respect he repeats that educators engaged in multi-racial education find that positive literary images concerning blacks provide identification, inspiration, and self-confidence for black children and promote understanding and appreciation for white children.

To summarize: It is an accepted fact that reading has a pertinent influence on the reader, especially the young reader. In a multicultural society books enable a child to learn about himself and about the different people around him. Children's literature is a medium of enrichment and socialization through which values are transmitted to the young. In this way the child learns to comprehend and appreciate his own culture and also that of other people; and thus, a healthy tolerant understanding between children, near and far, can be established.

## The South African Scene

After the Cape had been established as a refreshment station by the Dutch East India Company in 1652 and later became colonized by the British, segregation between the white colonists and the black inhabitants gradually became a way of life until it was legalized by the South African Government in the 1940s and upheld thereafter. Also the education system became fully segregated following the establishment of different schools and education departments for the four major population groups in the country, *viz.* Blacks, Coloreds, Indians, and Whites. At present constitutional changes are taking place which hopefully will bring about a new democratic, non-racial, and just society.

South Africa is a country of many cultures and languages. Besides the two official languages, Afrikaans and English, a number of indigenous languages like Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho are spoken. According to the 1980 census the distribution of the total population according to home language is as follows:

Zulu	21%
Xhosa	18%
Afrikaans	16%
English	9%
North Sotho	9%
Tswana	8%
South Sotho	7%
Tsonga	4%
Ndebele	2%
Swazi	2%
Venda	2%
Rest	2%

Out of the total population of forty million, six million people speak Afrikaans as home language and nearly half of the total population can speak and understand Afrikaans.

The Afrikaans language has developed at the Cape from seventeenth century Dutch, especially from the language of the workers and seafarers and it became the communication medium between the colonists, the natives, and the slaves. As there were few schools at the Cape, this language of the unskilled developed into a new language which originally was only a spoken language but which gradually also influenced the more elitist Dutch, spoken and written by the Cape Government officials. This spoken language was obviously influenced by the local people and immigrants from other

parts of Europe and the slaves from the East. At first this early form of Afrikaans had to struggle against the Dutch spoken by the upper class in Cape Town and surroundings. Later under the British occupation it had to battle against the all powerful English language. To a large extent the church played a major role in combatting the English threat. However, Afrikaans was only recognized as an official language in 1925. This was part of the rise to power of the Afrikaans-speaking people in many fields of society, especially since 1948, when the (Afrikaners) Nationalist Party took over power in Parliament. As a result of the apartheid policy legalized by the National Party and the rejection of this policy by the black majority, the Afrikaans language was gradually seen as the language of the oppressor. Consequently boycotts by school children against the compulsory learning of this language became a strong force against the government. On the other hand, Afrikaans remains today the home language of the majority of the so-called Colored people (three million).

As a result of the present negotiation process between the government and other major parties in the country, it seems as if the Afrikaans language is gradually being depoliticized. However, the future of Afrikaans as an official language is at present uncertain.

### **Afrikaans Children's Books in a Past and Present South Africa**

The first Afrikaans children's book, a Bible story, was written by C.P. Hoogenhout and published in 1873. Hoogenhout was a driving force behind the first Afrikaans Language Movement. His aim was the recognition of Afrikaans as a written and spoken language instead of Dutch, mainly for religious reasons. The Second Afrikaans Language Movement originated after the Anglo Boer War (1902) when most of the Afrikaans people had lost their farms and means of living. It was realized that the one uniting factor was the Afrikaans language against the domination of the English language. Gradually some children's books were published, and in 1925 Afrikaans became a recognized official language together with English. At that time approximately twenty-five Afrikaans children's books were available. Many of the stories were adapted from Dutch or German stories. These books were mostly published in the Netherlands and the illustrations and production were not of a high quality. Until the Second World War no children's books in

Afrikaans were comparable in quality to European children's books.

Only after the Second World War more attention was given to original local stories and the production and illustrations improved. In this respect the South African Library Association played an enormous part by creating the C.P. Hoogenhout Award for the best Afrikaans children's book in 1960. At first, this prestigious prize was awarded annually, since 1982 bi-annually. Initially it was either awarded to an author or an illustrator. After the creation of the Katrine Harries Award for children's book illustrations in 1973 (named after the famous South African illustrator of German origin), the C.P. Hoogenhout prize is only awarded to authors. These awards have improved children's books in Afrikaans tremendously so that the writing, graphic work, and production are comparable to the best in the world.

For the publisher of Afrikaans books a major problem is the limited number of readers. Where publishers of English children's books can often publish 10,000 copies of a book, the average number of Afrikaans children's books is 2,500. Consequently the price per copy of this small number must be higher than the British or American book. This also has its consequences regarding expensive colored illustrations. The result is that often the South African publisher has to rely on co-printing with overseas publishers to meet the needs for full-color picture books, with the additional problem that either the text or the illustrations may be unfamiliar to the South African reader. The local illustrator must accept the fact that he can work in color only in exceptional cases, and even then he will be limited to one or two colors.

By comparison it may interest you that only a few original children's books in English have been published in South Africa, mainly as a result of the abundance of titles available from the English speaking countries. In the nineteenth century books in the African languages appeared through the activities of the missionaries. Besides translations of the *Bible* in these indigenous languages, some stories for children appeared. Only recently African children's books have been published mostly as local co-production with the Afrikaans and English texts.

The question may now be asked in which way the local situation in a multicultural society like South Africa, with its history of apartheid, has been portrayed in children's books in the past and the present. The person

who has made a thorough study of racism in Afrikaans children's books is Dr. A. Töttemeyer, at present lecturer in library science at the University of Namibia. In a doctoral study at the University of Stellenbosch, completed in 1984, she established that the early stories and illustrations reflected the racial prejudices of the white community of that time, while contemporary books created a more positive image of the black person.

### Summary

In a country where race and ethnicity have become the cornerstone of an ideology of human separation for many years resulting in the estrangement and alienation between the people of the country and especially the children, a literature which will bring the children together again and bridge the existing gap in order to promote inter-racial understanding is imperative.

The message of this paper is that children's books can have a pertinent, positive influence on the life and behavior of children in a multicultural society if this coincides with a healthy, humane social order. South Africa is taken as an example, but the implications stretch far beyond one specific country. It is hoped that children's books in South Africa will form a bridge between children of different cultures in a country that prepares itself for a new democratic, non-racial, and just society.

In conclusion, I want to convey the thoughts of a Dutch pedagogue. His ideas are commendable, especially concerning the promotion of the right literature in a multicultural society so that authors, illustrators, librarians, and teachers can all try to build a better nation with good books.

He who teaches somebody to read does good work. He who teaches somebody to appraise healthy literature above everything that provokes does even better work. But he who strives to let the intent of the good book become the purport of somebody's life, does work of everlasting value.

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# The Provision of Public Library Services in the Irish Language

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I would like to highlight the range of services which are made available for Irish speakers in public libraries in Northern Ireland. In particular, I would like to illuminate those services which are especially tailored for young people and made available in City's Central Library. The range and quality of these services are developing constantly, and while the Central Library would be recognized as one of the fore-runners in the provision of such services, it is not the only public library in Northern Ireland to have taken an active role in meeting the library and information needs of Irish speakers.

To begin, I would like to look briefly at the philosophy of the provision of Irish language services in general. I would also like to highlight some statistics regarding speakers of the language before going on to look at examples of this area of library provision.

It is difficult to discuss the library and information needs of Northern Ireland's Irish speakers in the absence of official statistics regarding such people. In 1991, for the first time since the introduction of Northern state in 1922, a question regarding the individual's ability to speak Irish was included on the census forms. The results of this census question are not yet available. In the absence of census figures, we rely on the estimate that perhaps ten per cent of the population of Northern Ireland have fluency in Irish.<sup>1</sup>

The Irish language has no official standing in Northern Ireland. Unlike its fellow Celtic cousin, Welsh, comparatively small amounts of funding are made available by the British government to assure its survival and promotion. However, the Irish language has a special place in Ireland, north and south. Irish is the indigenous language of the country. Examples of the influence of the language can be found in many aspects of everyday life, such as dialect and placenames. Irish is a community language which is used widely as a living vernacular by people from every social strata.

It is a lamented fact that the Irish language as an aspect of Northern Irish life has

been given political undertones. In its annual report, the *Ultach Trust* acknowledges this problem:

Not all Irish language activities are well meaning, and for a highly vocal minority, the language is an integral part of the political programme. Sometimes it is in the interests of these groups to encourage unionist alienation from the language, and to identify Irish even more closely with the nationalist community...

In a strange mirror image of this cast of mind, many Unionists, following a programme to build Britishness by rejecting everything Irish, are extremely hostile to the language, for motive which are themselves essentially political.

But there is hope that the work of bodies such as the *Ultach Trust* and the Community Relations Council who promote the language across political and religious divisions is making the language more widely acceptable. The recently published document, "Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland," state that when asked whether they agree or disagreed that all secondary pupils should study the Irish language and Irish culture, twenty three per cent of protestants strongly agreed whilst fourteen per cent of protestants neither disagreed or agreed. These figures give hope to the idea that the Irish language is finding increasing acceptance in the loyalist tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Enormous goodwill exists toward Irish. An example of this goodwill is reflected in the growth in the establishment of Irish language projects especially since the foundation in 1989 of the British Government funded *Ultach Trust* whose brief includes, "the encouragement of interest in the language across the religious and political divide," and also, "the administering of government funds to Irish language initiatives."<sup>2</sup> Such initiative abound throughout Northern Ireland today. Examples of these are:

The establishment of the daily *La*.

There are now some fourteen Irish medium preschool play groups and five medium primary schools. Irish is also studied widely as a curriculum subject in many English medium schools.

Interest among adults is seen in the existence of numerous vocational language classes and the University of Ulster and Queens University offer degree courses to be studied through Irish.

BBC Radio Foyle's Irish Language Unit in Derry and its counterpart, BBC Radio Ulster in Belfast are further examples of state-funded bodies which provide services for Irish speakers.

In this context, it is seen that libraries too are responding to the demand for Irish language services. Examples of libraries involved in this provision include:

Newry Public Library which last year hosted an information day giving a forum to State bodies, community groups, and private agencies to present their objectives regarding the Irish language to the public. This was done by means of exhibitions, talks, and cultural events.

The Linnenhall Library has been very active in, for example, the organization of book launches and creative writing competitions. Public classes for learners of Irish are held in the library on a weekly basis.

The importance of the development of Irish language services is reflected in the establishment of the Irish Language Librarians Working Party, Meitheal Oibre Na Gaeilge, which is presently applying for affiliation with the Library Association both north and south of the Irish border. In the future the Working Party will be available to offer advice and guidance to librarians who wish to initiate and develop Irish language services.

The Central Library in Derry is another public library which is active in striving to meet the needs of Irish speakers. In Derry, the growth of interest in Irish has been particularly marked. Derry City Council recognizes the importance of Irish, and one of its stated aims regarding language is: "to encourage the spread of the Irish language in the Derry City Council area," and to "work towards the full recognition of the Irish language."<sup>4</sup>

Examples of community-based projects which exist in the City and which provide Irish language services are:

The four Irish medium preschool play groups which cater for some eighty children, and a stream in the Steelstown Primary School where presently some one hundred fifty children receive education solely through Irish.

The local BBC radio station, Radio Foyle, broadcasts daily programs in Irish.

Staff at Derry's Central Library are particularly aware of the importance of the provision of library services which are tailored to suit the needs of Irish speakers. There are books, periodicals, and language learning cassettes as well as music and stories on cassette. There is a range of support and publicity materials in Irish, for example: indexes, information files, bookmarks, and stock guides.

Services are promoted by means of a wide range of cultural events which include:

**Information days:** For the past two years library staff have organized "La Eolas Na Gaeilge: Irish language information day," when State bodies, private agencies, and community groups are invited to interpret their objectives regarding the Irish language. This is done by means of exhibitions, talks, workshops, and cultural events. "La Eolas Na Gaeilge" provides library staff with an ideal occasion to gain feed-back regarding services as well as to promote them.

**Storytelling for children and adults:** The Central Library based group, The Foyle Yarnspinners, are acclaimed for their storytelling sessions both in Irish and English. These successful community events offer an opportunity for Irish speakers to share in the rich tradition of storytelling which exists in the language. Performers to have taken the floor at storytelling events include John Grainne O'Doibheannaigh and Brid Anna Ni Bhaioil.

**Library visits for young people and adults:** These visits aim to introduce new users to the library and are offered in the medium of Irish.

**Book launches:** The library has been the venue for the launch of several important books. For example, *Ruball Na Mickies* by Seamas Mac Annaidh and *The Decline of the Irish Language* by Reg Hindley.

**Craft sessions and workshops:** These are run in conjunction with Derry City Council's Orchard Gallery as well as with schools and colleges. These events are aimed at young people and have explored themes from Irish literature such as those in *Tain Bo Cuailgne*.

Lectures and debates: Some issues explored are:

The possibility of the foundation of a city Gaeltacht or Irish speaking neighborhood.

The decline of the Irish language.

The establishment of an Irish language medium University.

The value of Irish language services and activities has been recognized by a range of public and private bodies in the form of generous funding. Sponsors who have supported library-based cultural events include: The Bank of Ireland, The Ulster Bank, BBC Radio Foyle, The Workers Education Council, Bord Na Gaeilge, Udaras Na Gaeltachta, Derry City Council, Northland Films, The Northern Ireland Arts Council and The Ultach Trust.

The library's activities have also attracted cross-border interest both in funding and in attendance. Events have been enjoyed by young people from educational institutions such as Bunscoil Ghaelach Leitir Ceanainn, The Regional College in Letterkenney, and Colaiste Mhuire Gan Smal in nearby Buncrana.

Cultural events have attracted the unpaid or token-paid support of a series of well-known entertainers and academics who have run workshops and lectures. Among them have been the authors, Gabriel Rossenstock, Tomas O'Canainn, and Breandan O'Doibhlinn as well as the television actor, Mick Lally. This support is forthcoming because of their favorable disposal to the language.

Library staff have been innovative in creating new services for Irish speakers. The following examples illustrate projects which have been initiated with the particular aim of meeting the library and information needs of Irish speaking young people as well as those young people who are interested in Irish. These projects resulted from the perceived needs for such services, having been identified by on-going community profiling. The projects are examples of the library's role as an activator for development in the community.

### **BBC Radio Foyle Project**

It is almost two years since Central Library staff approached BBC Radio Foyle's Irish language department with the idea that the Community radio station might be interested in producing sound cassettes to accompany a selection of Irish language children's books

which were held at the library. The idea behind the project was that the cassettes would aim to support the less competent non-native speaker in introducing Irish texts to second language learners. The project was stimulated by Tina Hickey's article in *Teangeolas* in which she writes:

Many parents are worried about their pronunciation and interpretation of an Irish text and are unsure of how to deal with a child's questions and difficulties. Yet such parents might be persuaded to involve themselves in their child's Irish reading if they had some support. One source of such support which has not yet been exploited for Irish books is the provision of tapes...<sup>5</sup>

Officials at Radio Foyle were quick to see the advantages of the project and after consultation with the publisher, An Gúm, the project was initiated on the basis that the cassettes would be made available to the community through public libraries. Radio Foyle was awarded generous funding for the project by the Central Community Relations Unit, and a post was created for a project co-ordinator. Local readers were employed to provide materials of a high quality. Initially, six cassettes were produced and made available, free of charge, to public libraries throughout Northern Ireland. The demand for the cassettes will now be monitored with an eye to assessing the commercial potential of the project in the hope of creating a permanent commercially based enterprise. The project is proving to be an important community venture. Being the first of its kind to be established in Ireland, not only has the project enhanced the value of library materials, it has generated employment and proved a valuable library promotions exercise, gaining much publicity and community goodwill for Central Library.

### **Creative Writing Competition**

Staff at Central Library recently welcomed the news that a local theater company has been granted government funding. The community-based puppet company, Puipeadóirí Naiscoil Na Rinne, was founded in 1989 as a result of the library's Irish language creative writing competition run in conjunction with the Workers Education Association. The winning play which was written by a local schoolteacher, Fearghal Mag Uiginn, was subsequently published in the journal, *An Ultach* and first performed in the Central Library. The

event was the subject of several local radio programs as well as a national television program in 1990. This was *Puipheadóirí Naiscoil Na Rinne's* first production and they were inspired by the creative talents of the Western Education and Library Board's display artist, Richard Sinclair, whose case of novel puppets were used to perform the play. After the production of the winning play, Central Library was approached by individuals and groups including the promotions department of two local councils who sought the services of the puppet company. This indicated that there is a demand for a locally-based theater company catering to the needs of young Irish speakers. The recently awarded funding by the Central Community Relations Unit will allow the company to purchase their own theater and cast of puppets.

### Promotional Video

The most recent project to have been completed is the creation of a professionally produced video which promotes Central Library's services for Irish speakers. This is perhaps the only video of its type to have been produced by a library in Ireland. This was a very challenging exercise for the library staff who scripted, produced, and directed the thirteen minute video. The film was shot over a period of nine months and the whole project took some two years before it reached completion in spring 1992. The result is an extremely attractive promotional tool which was created with the assistance of library users, local schools, and BBC radio presenters. In recognition of the importance of the project, lecturer/composer Micheal O'Suilleabhain of University College, Cork, permitted the use, as theme music, of a track from his award winning C.D. *Dolphin's Way*. The video was sponsored by a range of community and semi-state bodies.

In common with a number of other libraries in Northern Ireland, Derry's Central Library provides an important range of services for Irish speakers. However, there is much more to be done in respect of the development and provision of such services as: indexes, information files, library guides, and cultural events. How many libraries, for example, have an Irish speaker on their staff?

As yet, the provision of Irish language services in public libraries is made on a piecemeal basis with no regard to official guidelines. In closing, I request that the British Government should strive to create imaginative policies

regarding services for Northern Ireland's indigenous language speakers and for those interested in the language. Examples of such policies exist in Wales in respect of the Welsh language. Just as in Wales, specialist librarians should be employed to oversee the establishment and development of native language services.

Irish language public library services are a relatively newly perceived area of provision in Northern Ireland's public libraries.

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